

To All Dedicated Servants of Jehovah

September 8, 1974

Dear Brothers:

Last week we had a thought-provoking special meeting with newly associated ones, did we not? Those who have shown interest in Jehovah and his grand purposes certainly were encouraged to think seriously and prayerfully about their standing with the Creator. Impressed upon them were the urgency of the times and the importance of their letting love for Jehovah move them to identify themselves on his side before the "great tribulation" strikes.

In view of the time, we, too, need to think seriously and prayerfully about our relationship with Jehovah God. It is not just a matter of looking forward with eager anticipation to the "great tribulation" and life in God's new order. Continued effort is required in proving ourselves to be Jehovah's devoted servants. The apostle Peter admonished: "Since you are awaiting these things, do your utmost to be found finally by him spotless and unblemished and in peace." —2 Pet. 3:14.

As a people, we are heeding the apostle's inspired counsel and are also aware of the need to continue making advancement in Christian living. But that is not necessarily the case with each individual professing to be a baptized disciple of Jesus Christ. So it is good for all of us, individually, to think seriously and prayerfully about what we are doing with our life in the concluding portion of the "last days." Were the "great tribulation" to begin tomorrow, what would our standing before Jehovah be?

Discharging Our Responsibility Toward the World of Mankind

Consider what you are doing in discharging your responsibility toward those who still are not approved servants of Jehovah. Their lives are in grave danger at the fast-approaching "great tribulation." Are you responding to their urgent need for help? Are your circumstances such that you could make adjustments in your routine of life to enable you to share to a greater extent in the vital warning and rescue work that will be ending soon?

This does not mean that you should be pushing yourself to the very limit, spending absolutely

no time for relaxation. Even Jesus Christ saw to it that his disciples got needed rest and refreshment. (Mark 6:31, 32) But the way you spend your time should reveal that the dominant desire of your heart is to prove yourself to be a loyal 'fellow worker' of Jehovah God, that you are putting yourself in a position to be used to the full by him in opening the hearts of your fellowmen to accept the truth.—1 Cor. 3:9; Acts 16:14.

In some cases, might discussions within the family circle lead to some family member's having a fuller share in this final part of the preaching work? Perhaps by a pooling of resources and effort by family members, one of their number could serve as a regular pioneer or a temporary pioneer. Even if that were not possible because of family responsibilities, could such a combining of effort result in increased preaching and teaching as a family? Would this concluding period of the "last days" not be an appropriate time for intensified activity?

We do not want to have a charge of bloodguilt leveled against us because of having been indifferent to the critical situation of people in our territory. (Compare Ezekiel 3:17-19.) And this is not going to be the case with us *as a body*. Genuine love and concern for fellow humans will not allow us to render mere token service.

This is certainly no time to be distracted by a desire to get comfortably situated in the world or by undue anxiety over making a living. (Matt. 13:22; Luke 21:34, 35; 1 Tim. 6:9, 10; 1 John 2:15-17) Because of having been commissioned to preach and to make disciples, true Christians have always had to put secular pursuits in a secondary place, devoting to preaching and teaching the time and effort that could otherwise rightly have been used to further material interests. (Matt. 28:19, 20) Should this not, then, be particularly the case in this concluding portion of the "time of the end"?

Our keeping secular work in its place, as a means to sustain ourselves in God's service and to aid others in obtaining physical necessities, will protect us in the troublesome times that we will doubtless face in the near future. (Eph. 4:

28; 1 Tim. 6:6-8, 17-19) We may be called upon to share what little we have with brothers who may be in even greater need. Will we be eager and willing to do that?

Then, too, we have no assurance that any of our material possessions will survive the "great tribulation." Remember Lot. He lost his house and other material possessions and thereafter had to put up with the discomfort of living in a cave with his two daughters. (Gen. 19:2, 16, 24, 25, 30) We also may find things very uncomfortable for some time during and after the destruction of this ungodly system. Might our attaching undue importance to material things now cause us to complain then and contribute toward making things more unpleasant for us and others? (Compare Numbers 11:4-6, 10; 20:3-5.) An even greater tragedy would be having heart appreciation for our relationship to Jehovah snuffed out by our being overly concerned about material possessions now and losing out on life, as did Lot's wife.—Gen. 19:26.

Preserving Fine Conduct

Remaining spotless and unblemished is not limited to our making wise use of time and assets in discharging our responsibility to preach. (Acts 20:26, 27) Our personal conduct is also involved. (Matt. 5:14-16) Are we striving, as the apostle Paul did, to keep sinful inclinations in check? (1 Cor. 9:27) Are we making progress in cultivating the fruitage of God's spirit? (Gal. 5:16-18, 22-24) Do we appreciate that enmity, contention, division and envy are just as bad in Jehovah's eyes as fornication, drunkenness and idolatry?—Gal. 5:19-21.

By far the majority of those dedicated to Jehovah God are preserving fine Christian conduct in a world that is rapidly becoming more degraded. We are also very much aware of our weaknesses, daily appealing to Jehovah for forgiveness of sin and striving hard to make improvement.—1 John 1:8-10.

But a few have allowed hatred to build up in their heart. They may refuse to speak to certain brothers and sisters, harboring grudges over minor offenses, real or imagined. They may ascribe bad motives to fellow believers, wrongly judging and condemning them. They may even carry on slanderous talk.—Gal. 5:13-15, 25, 26; Jas. 3:5-16; 4:11, 12.

Still others may try to get as close to the world's ways as possible. They want to show worldlings that we, too, can have "fun." Such action may reveal itself in immodest dancing, heavy drinking and the like.—1 Pet. 4:1-5.

What does examination of your conduct indicate? If you see areas wherein you could make

improvement and you really want to do so, you have reason to be happy. Why? Because it shows that your heart is responding properly, motivating you in the right direction. On the other hand, you may recognize that your heart has set its affections on things other than spiritual interests. Or, you may have difficulty in getting along peacefully with others. In that case, you will want to work hard to adjust your thinking so that your situation does not worsen and the "great tribulation" find you spotted, blemished and at disunity with Jehovah God and his people.

What we have as Jehovah's servants is something too precious to sacrifice now when we are so close to the realization of our hope—life in God's righteous new order. Would it not be foolish to allow ourselves to yield to temptation and to become practitioners of sin? Would it not be tragic to lose out on life due to the pursuit of temporary material riches, compromise under pressure from the world, or developing an indifferent attitude toward the lifesaving preaching and disciple-making work?

Even now we enjoy rich rewards from serving Jehovah. We have true friends who really care about us. While we still have problems, our situation is far better than it was before we knew the truth. The wisdom contained in the Bible has enabled us to cope much better with the problems of life. Obedience to God's Word has enabled us to get along better within the family and in our daily contacts with others. Has this not made life more pleasant for us? Really, what better way is there to live than as a devoted servant of Jehovah God? This in itself is something to guard jealously, along with the prospect of an eternity of life in the fast-approaching New Order.—Mark 10:29, 30.

Make it your solemn determination to do your utmost to be found by Jehovah God "spotless and unblemished and in peace." Exert yourself in helping others to gain salvation while there is yet time. Let your whole course of life testify to the fact that you are convinced that your relationship to Jehovah is the most important thing in your life. Live each day as if it were your last. If you do this, you can rest assured that no matter when the "great tribulation" strikes, you will not be caught unprepared and fall but will continue standing as an approved servant of Jehovah.—Rev. 7:14-17.

Your fellow servants,

Watchtower B. V. S. Society
OF NEW YORK, INC.