

Watchtower, 3/15/1986, pages 12-14
'Do Not Be Quickly Shaken From Your Reason'

“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.”—2 THESSALONIANS 2:1, 2.

PLEASANT memories invariably come to mind when we as Christians reflect on the time when we first learned the truth from God’s Word. It was beautiful, reasonable, satisfying. How our hearts swelled with appreciation when we learned about Jehovah and his lofty qualities, including his great love and his mercy! We rejoiced when we came into association with fellow believers who showed genuine Christian love and lived by Bible principles.

2 How thankful we were to learn that Jehovah will soon remove pain, sorrow, and even death. (Revelation 21:3, 4) Imagine, living forever on a paradise earth, with perfect health and complete happiness! It was almost too good to be true. But it was true. It was backed by God’s Word. It was thrilling! Undoubtedly, we felt just like Jesus’ disciples when he appeared to them after his resurrection. They said to one another: “Were not our hearts burning as he was speaking to us on the road, as he was fully opening up the Scriptures to us?” (Luke 24:32) Yes, on learning the truth and dedicating our lives to Jehovah, we found ourselves in a spiritual paradise. What a blessing!

3 But being in Jehovah’s spiritual paradise is not something we can take for granted. We came into this paradise voluntarily; we can walk right out (or be put out) if we go into unbelief or willfully violate Jehovah’s righteous laws. Of course, this will not happen if we keep strong the ‘love we had at first,’ if we continue to appreciate all of Jehovah’s provisions to keep us spiritually strong. (Revelation 2:4) But the Devil and other opposers of true worship are skilled in deception. We should never forget that they stand ever ready to break our integrity if they can. Their propaganda is designed to weaken our faith, to cool our love for God, to sow doubts in our minds—yes, to make the spiritual paradise appear to be no paradise at all.

4 To borrow from a proverbial saying, we could come to the point where we would find it difficult, perhaps even impossible, to see the forest of the spiritual paradise because of looking so closely at the imperfect human trees now in it. The thrill we had in learning the truth of God’s Word, the grand hope we came to have, the love we developed for God and our spiritual brothers, and the zeal we had for Jehovah’s service can fade. If drastic steps are not taken to reverse any such spiritual deterioration, soon God’s loving requirements seem to be oppressive. The wholesome spiritual food from “the faithful and discreet slave” may seem to be something

contemptible, and the brotherhood of loving servants of Jehovah may appear to be a household of enemies. Then the only satisfaction, of a perverted kind, may come in beginning to beat one's fellow slaves with slander and half-truths.—Matthew 24:45-51.

5 Yes, we could not only lose the blessings of the spiritual paradise now but, more seriously, also lose the hope of living eternally in the earthly Paradise. And we could lose out for the same reason that Adam and Eve lost the Paradise of Eden. They had everything they needed to be perfectly happy and could have lived forever. But independence—actually a different teaching—was more important to them than were obedience to Jehovah and the blessings of Eden. Eve was deceived. While Adam was not deceived, he let the force of circumstances, including the strong influence of his wife, cause him to sin also. Therefore, they were put out of Paradise, to live a miserable life until their death. They lost the prospect of everlasting life for themselves and brought an inheritance of sin and death upon their offspring. (Genesis 3:1-7, 14-19, 24; 1 Timothy 2:14; Romans 5:12) What a terrible price to pay for their so-called independence!

6 The apostle Paul expressed this concern: "I am afraid that somehow, as the serpent seduced Eve by its cunning, your minds might be corrupted away from the sincerity and the chastity that are due the Christ." (2 Corinthians 11:3) Paul found it necessary to write regarding some erroneous teachings that were circulating in his day. In his second letter to the congregation at Thessalonica, he wrote: "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."—2 Thessalonians 2:1-3.

Have No Dealings With Apostates

7 Now, what will you do if you are confronted with apostate teaching—subtle reasonings—claiming that what you believe as one of Jehovah's Witnesses is not the truth? For example, what will you do if you receive a letter or some literature, open it, and see right away that it is from an apostate? Will curiosity cause you to read it, just to see what he has to say? You may even reason: 'It won't affect me; I'm too strong in the truth. And, besides, if we have the truth, we have nothing to fear. The truth will stand the test.' In thinking this way, some have fed their minds upon apostate reasoning and have fallen prey to serious questioning and doubt. (Compare James 1:5-8.) So remember the warning at 1 Corinthians 10:12: "Let him that thinks he is standing beware that he does not fall."

8 With loving help from caring brothers, some having doubts sown by apostates have recovered after a period of spiritual turmoil and trauma. But this pain could have been avoided. At Proverbs 11:9 we are told: “By his mouth the one who is an apostate brings his fellowman to ruin, but by knowledge are the righteous rescued.” Jude told fellow Christians to “continue showing mercy to some that have doubts; save them by snatching them out of the fire.” (Jude 22, 23) Paul advised the overseer Timothy to instruct “with mildness those not favorably disposed; as perhaps God may give them repentance leading to an accurate knowledge of truth, and they may come back to their proper senses out from the snare of the Devil, seeing that they have been caught alive by him for the will of that one.”—2 Timothy 2:25, 26.

9 Tragically, others have gone into complete darkness, even going back to Christendom’s erroneous teachings. The apostle Peter wrote about the tragic outcome for some who first walked in the truth but then turned aside. He said: “Certainly if, after having escaped from the defilements of the world by an accurate knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they get involved again with these very things and are overcome, the final conditions have become worse for them than the first.” Peter said they are like the dog that returns to its vomit and the bathed sow that turns back to wallowing in the mire.—2 Peter 2:20-22.

10 When a fellow human tells us, ‘Do not read this’ or, ‘Do not listen to that,’ we may be tempted to ignore his advice. But remember, in this case Jehovah is the One who tells us in his Word what to do. And what does he say about apostates? “Avoid them” (Romans 16:17, 18); “quit mixing in company with” them (1 Corinthians 5:11); and “never receive [them] into your homes or say a greeting to [them]” (2 John 9, 10). These are emphatic words, clear directions. If, out of curiosity, we were to read the literature of a known apostate, would that not be the same as inviting this enemy of true worship right into our home to sit down with us and relate his apostate ideas?

11 Let us illustrate matters in this way: Suppose your teenage son received some pornographic material in the mail. What would you do? If he was inclined to read it out of curiosity, would you say: ‘Yes, son, go ahead and read it. It won’t hurt you. From infancy we’ve taught you that immorality is bad. Besides, you need to know what’s going on in the world in order to see that it’s truly bad’? Would you reason that way? Absolutely not! Rather, you would surely point out the dangers of reading pornographic literature and would require that it be destroyed. Why? Because no matter how strong a person may be in the truth, if he feeds his mind on the perverted ideas found in such literature, his mind and heart will be affected. A lingering wrong desire planted in the recesses of the heart can eventually create a perverted sexual appetite. The result? James says that when wrong desire becomes fertile, it gives birth to sin, and sin leads to death. (James 1:15) So why start the chain reaction?

12 Well, if we would act so decisively to protect our children from exposure to pornography, should we not expect that our loving heavenly Father would similarly warn us and protect us from spiritual fornication, including apostasy? He says, Keep away from it!

13 But suppose we are preaching the good news and people raise questions or objections similar to those raised by opposers? Of course, if a person is not sincere and merely wishes to argue, usually it is best to excuse ourselves and go to the next door. But if someone sincerely asks about certain claims of apostates, what can be done? First, we can ask what, exactly, has caused the concern. It may be only one or two points. Then we can stick to these and answer from the Scriptures, from the Society's publications, and from what we truthfully know about the subject. We need not conclude that we have to read a book or a pamphlet that is filled with slander and half-truths in order to refute the false claims and teachings of opposers.

Confidence in Jehovah

14 As we go forward, building faith and keeping busy in Kingdom service, we can confidently put our trust in Jehovah, knowing that, as our loving heavenly Father, he wants the very best for us. God teaches us; he warns us. He does this through his Word and by means of clear direction provided by his visible organization. If we were to ask a loving parent for bread and fish, he would not give us a stone or a serpent. Neither will God fool us or deceive us. (Matthew 7:7-11) Yet, God will not completely shield us from temptations or even deceptive lies and devilish propaganda. He says of himself: "I, Jehovah, am your God, the One teaching you to benefit yourself, the One causing you to tread in the way in which you should walk." (Isaiah 48:17) Yes, Jehovah 'teaches us to benefit ourselves.' He tells us to keep separate from apostates and their teaching, and this for our own protection. It means our life.

15 The apostle Paul warned fellow Christian elders: "From among you yourselves men will rise and speak twisted things to draw away the disciples after themselves." (Acts 20:30) If we keep listening to subtle arguments and specious reasoning, "twisted things" can sound as though they were straight. The longer Eve looked at the forbidden fruit and listened to the twisted reasoning of the Devil, the more she was convinced that he was right. Paul warned: "Look out: perhaps there may be someone who will carry you off as his prey through the philosophy and empty deception according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary things of the world and not according to Christ." (Colossians 2:8) The apostle also indicated that "by smooth talk and complimentary speech [apostates] seduce the hearts of guileless ones." (Romans 16:17, 18; compare 2 Corinthians 11:13-15.) Of course, the fact that a few are drawn away by

that kind of propaganda does not mean that we have to follow them. Nevertheless, we need to be continually alert.

16 The Devil's tactics have not changed since Eden. He uses subtle questioning and an appeal to self-interest. Peter wrote: "There will also be false teachers among you. These very ones will quietly bring in destructive sects . . . Also, with covetousness they will exploit you with counterfeit words." (2 Peter 2:1-3) Something counterfeit is designed to look or sound genuine. At 2 Timothy 2:14-19, Paul stressed the importance of using Jehovah's Word to set matters straight but warned of the need to avoid apostates, whose 'empty speeches violate what is holy,' for, said he, "their word will spread like gangrene."

17 A fitting analogy indeed! Like gangrene, apostate reasoning is nothing but quick-spreading spiritual death. And since the members of the congregation are like one body, there is a danger that others may be infected. If the one spreading apostate teachings cannot be restored to spiritual health by loving but firm application of the balm of God's Word, amputation of this member (disfellowshipping) may be the only alternative for the protection of other members of the body. (Compare Titus 1:10, 11.) Do not be infected by deadly gangrene of a spiritual kind! Keep in good spiritual health by avoiding the contamination of apostate thinking. Heed the sound advice at 2 Peter 3:17, 18: "You, therefore, beloved ones, having this advance knowledge, be on your guard that you may not be led away with them by the error of the law-defying people and fall from your own steadfastness. No, but go on growing in the undeserved kindness and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."