



Bible Lens

Bible Lens—January 4–10, 2021

Subject: **Sacrament**

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Exploring Bible Verses

An exploration of Bible citations from the *Christian Science Quarterly*® Bible Lessons

“ . . . a lesson on which the prosperity of Christian Science largely depends.”—Mary Baker Eddy

from the Responsive Reading

Romans 1:9, 10, 12

God is my witness, . . . that without ceasing I mention you always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you. . . . that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine.

—Revised Standard Version

Paul's longing to visit his fellow Christians in Rome is palpable in these verses. He hadn't founded this church or traveled there. In fact, it would be another three years before he reached Rome. Yet his prayers for this community—and his hope for the unity of their Jewish and Gentile members—were constant.

In introducing his epistle, Paul humbly and diplomatically admits his purpose to be mutual encouragement. The spiritual gift he brings to them (see [v. 11](#), Golden Text) is understood to be the gospel, and he clearly expects to benefit by his contact with them as well—to “have some fruit among you” ([v. 13](#)).

II Corinthians 8:1–3

We want you to know, brethren, about the grace of God which has been shown in the churches of Macedo'nia, for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of liberality on their part. For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own free will.

—Revised Standard Version

Macedonia was the earliest European location to receive the gospel message directly from Paul, and it remained an important object of his missionary work. Macedonian Christians had endured a severe testing time—ill treatment at the hands of those antagonistic to Christianity and extreme poverty from Roman exploitation of their country.

At this time Paul is collecting funds for the cash-strapped church in Jerusalem, the mother church of every other Christian church. To urge Corinthian believers to contribute, he presents the Macedonians as a model of generous giving, contrasting their poverty and “wealth of liberality.” Later he adds, “Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver” (9:7).

liberality: generosity

means: money; ability to pay

free will: individual choice; willingness

II Corinthians 8:7

Now as you excel in everything—in faith, in utterance, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in your love for us—see that you excel in this gracious work also.

—Revised Standard Version

excel: do something very well

utterance: spoken word or statement

from Section 1

Translation

1 | | John 4:16

We have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love.

...

... we know (understand, recognize, are conscious of, by observation and by experience) and believe (adhere to and put faith in and rely on) the love God cherishes for us. God is love...

—Amplified® Bible Classic

Translation

2 | | Chronicles 29:14

For all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.

...

*Since everything comes from you,
we have given you that which comes from your own
hand.*

from Section 2

Translation

4 | Deuteronomy 28:2, 3, 6

All these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God. Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field. . . . Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out.

...

You will experience all these blessings if you obey the LORD your God:

Your towns and your fields

will be blessed. . . .

Wherever you go and whatever you do,

you will be blessed.

—New Living Translation

4 | Deuteronomy 28:3, 6

Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field. . . . Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out.

Here Hebrew Scripture portrays the promise of God’s goodness in the details of daily life—wherever one works (city or field) and whatever one does (coming in or going out). Obedience to covenant requirements guarantees these blessings (see [vv. 1, 2](#)).

5 | Numbers 11:16, 17

The Lord said unto Moses, Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers over them; and bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation, that they may stand there with thee. And I will come down and talk with thee there: and I will take of the spirit which is upon thee, and will put it upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear it not thyself alone.

Yahweh’s instruction follows the people’s cry for meat—and the Hebrew leader’s protest “I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me” (see [vv. 10–14](#)). God’s answer is twofold: He provides a team of human helpers and pledges the descent of His spirit on them.

Nothing is known about the elders Eldad and Medad (mentioned in [verse 26](#)), including why they didn’t join the other officials at the tabernacle. But Joshua’s complaint about them, made out of concern for Moses’ honor, is rebuked: Moses wishes the gift of the spirit to be bestowed on everyone (see [vv. 28, 29](#)).

Joel later records this divine assurance: “I will pour out of my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions” ([Joel 2:28](#))—and the Apostle Peter cites this oracle on the Day of Pentecost when he confirms the availability of the spirit of God to everyone (see [Acts 2:17](#)).

Translation

6 | [I Thessalonians 5:19, 20](#)

Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings.

...

Do not stifle the Holy Spirit. Do not scoff at prophecies. . . .

—New Living Translation

from Section 3

Translation

8 | [I Timothy 1:14](#)

The grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

...

Our Lord was very kind to me. Through his kindness he brought me to faith and gave me the love that Christ Jesus shows people.

—GOD’S WORD Translation

9 | [Mark 12:41–44](#)

Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: for all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.

In addition to being places of worship, ancient temples functioned as banks or treasuries for collecting money—often for upkeep of the buildings. Bible authorities surmise that the noise of coins thrown into the receptacle drew attention to how much (or how little) was given. One suggests: “Jesus’ ears were attuned to the faintest noise of all, the falling of two small coins, the smallest in circulation. . . . Yet in the sight of God, who looks on the heart, that was big business. It has proved to be one of the world’s mightiest financial transactions.”

Jesus doesn't criticize those who give "of their abundance"—he simply makes the point that the widow holds nothing back. "All that she had, even all her living" emphatically describes this woman's unbounded expression of love. Another commentator writes, "The poor widow is not a mere model for the charitable; she is a model of the Christ."

mites, farthing: very small amounts of money

want: lack of necessities; poverty

Translation

10 | Malachi 3:10

Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

...

"Bring to the storehouse a tenth of what you gain. Then there will be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord of heaven's armies. "I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out more blessings than you have room for."

—International Children's Bible

from Section 4

11 | John 6:35

Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.

Food was simple in Jesus' day and culture. Among the main staples of diet—cheese, fruits, vegetables, and sometimes fish—bread was so essential that it became synonymous with life itself. It was also considered a gift from God and a daily reminder of His continuous love.

Christ Jesus' identification of himself as the "bread of life"—as well as the "living bread which came down from heaven" (v. 51)—places his teachings and mission at the heart of everyday experience.

12 | Matthew 14:14–16, 19, 20

Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick. And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals. But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat. . . . And [Jesus] commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full.

Of the well over thirty scriptural accounts of Jesus' healings, his feeding of the five thousand is the only "miracle story" (apart from the resurrection) that occurs in all four Gospels. And while accounts of a common event may diverge on details, all of the Gospels agree on the numbers involved: five thousand men, five loaves, two fishes, twelve baskets of leftover food. Matthew alone mentions an additional but unknown number of women and children (see [v. 21](#)), potentially increasing the total fed by as much as four times.

victuals (pronounced "vittles"): food

from Section 5

Translation

13 | [John 17:1](#)

These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee.

...

When Jesus had spoken these things, He lifted up His eyes to heaven and said, Father, the hour has come. Glorify and exalt and honor and magnify Your Son, so that Your Son may glorify and extol and honor and magnify You.

—Amplified® Bible Classic

14 | [Luke 22:8](#)

Go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat.

passover: feast to celebrate Hebrew liberation from slavery in Egypt

15 | [Mark 14:22, 23](#)

Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is my body. And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it.

While each guest at this Passover meal presumably had his own cup, the passing of Jesus' cup to his disciples is seen as symbolic of their shared experience. Later, in his heartfelt petition to God, Jesus uses the cup as an image for the suffering he knew to be coming: "Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt" ([v. 36](#)).

17 | [Luke 23:34](#)

Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.

Only the Gospel of Luke includes these words of Jesus from the cross. A commentary calls it "one of the most profound examples of how Jesus' teachings on nonviolence, nonretaliation, and forgiveness are to be lived out."

Stephen utters a similar prayer before his death from stoning: “Lay not this sin to their charge” ([Acts 7:60](#)). A second authority remarks, “Others may have in their hearts the unforgiving spirit, others may sin in ignorance; but we know better. We are Christ’s men and women; and we must forgive as he forgave.”

from Section 6

19 | [Mark 16:6](#)

Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen.

Spoken by a “young man” (called an “angel” in [Matthew 28:2](#)), this announcement is made to three women visiting Jesus’ tomb. The angel’s advance knowledge of whom they are seeking—and of the crucifixion—must have moved the women’s thought beyond the details of accessing the sepulcher and anointing the body (see [vv. 1, 3](#)). News of the resurrection would have certainly replaced their sorrow with joy.

“The conviction that Jesus is risen,” a Bible scholar points out, “does not rest upon surmise or conjecture but upon a clear declaration.” In early Christian tradition, the angel’s words became a succinct summary of the gospel. Peter employs a similar reference, for instance, in his Pentecost sermon (see [Acts 2:14–24](#)). And Paul incorporates it in [First Corinthians 15:3, 4](#).

19 | [Mark 16:14](#)

Afterward [Jesus] appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.

upbraided: scolded

20 | [John 21:4–6](#)

When the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No. And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.

Soon after his resurrection, Jesus promises the women at his tomb that he will see the disciples in Galilee (see [Mark 16:7](#)). His appearance on the shore of the Sea of Tiberias, or Galilee, is one fulfillment of that pledge. Among other post-resurrection occasions, Jesus meets his closest followers on a Galilean mountain and joins them at an indoor gathering (see [Matthew 28:16–20](#); [Luke 24:36–49](#); [John 20:19–23](#)).

Just as food was multiplied for a hungry crowd (see [Matthew 14:14–21](#), citation 12), here the disciples’ usual catch is greatly increased—numbered at 153 large fish (see [John 21:11](#)). And as the fishermen discover, the provision includes a meal on the shore. A commentator notes, “Jesus’ preparation of this meal for his disciples confirms that he is the giver of gifts, the source of life-sustaining nourishment.”

from Section 7

21 | [Hebrews 12:28](#)

Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

Translation

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that can't be shaken, let's continue to express our gratitude. With this gratitude, let's serve in a way that is pleasing to God with respect and awe. . . .

—Common English Bible

Contrasting God's kingdom with "things that are shaken" ([v. 27](#)), the writer depicts an unshakable reality available in the present time. "The only things to remain," suggests one source, "will be the things which can never be shaken; and chief among them is our relationship with God." Another affirms, "We belong to a kingdom which cannot be affected by the convulsion which will destroy the material universe."

Serving God "acceptably" alludes to worship that is pleasing to Him—offered with deep reverence. *Acceptable*, like the term *well-pleasing*, is translated from the Greek adjective *euarestos*. [Hebrews 13:20, 21](#) (citation 22) exhorts, for instance, "Now the God of peace . . . make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing [*euarestos*] in his sight." And [Romans 12:1](#) uses it in the charge "Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable [*euarestos*] unto God, which is your reasonable service."

wherefore: for which reason

fear: deep respect

22 | [Hebrews 13:20, 21](#)

Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever.

Translation

The God of peace brought the great shepherd of the sheep, our Lord Jesus, back to life through the blood of an eternal promise. May this God of peace prepare you to do every good thing he wants. May he work in us through Jesus Christ to do what is pleasing to him. . . .

—GOD'S WORD Translation

Part of the conclusion of the book of Hebrews, this prayer combines core elements of Christian doctrine—Jesus' resurrection, his identity as shepherd, and the significance of his blood.

Christ Jesus had declared himself the good shepherd, who "giveth his life for the sheep" ([John 10:11](#)). Through the crucifixion, he indeed gave his life—and, as the blood of sacrificial animals confirmed Jewish covenants (see [Exodus 24:6–8](#)), his blood represented a new covenant between God and man. His resurrection infused these events with profound meaning and yielded an enduring example of salvation.

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ON THE MISSION OF THE *CHRISTIAN SCIENCE SENTINEL*

The sentinel still reminds us of the need to watch. And it still alerts us to the primary thing: proving in our own lives the power of Christ.

March 1987