



Shining a light on the weekly Bible Lessons published in the *Christian Science Quarterly*®

Spirit

February 1–7, 2021

from the **Golden Text**

[Isaiah 59:21](#)

*The Lord says: "My people,
I promise to give you my Spirit
and my message.*

*These will be my gifts to you
and your families forever.*

I, the Lord, have spoken."

—Contemporary English Version

God's promise here recalls both His covenant with the Hebrew people and the commissioning of His prophets (see example in [Genesis 17:7](#)). Paul cites this prophecy to assure Jewish Christians that although Gentiles have been welcomed into the community of faith, God still upholds His commitment to Israel (see [Romans 11:26, 27](#)).

According to a scriptural authority, "God's Spirit and words would be given to all Israel so that all would become prophets of the living God." This inclusive message speaks to all believers, throughout all time.

from the **Responsive Reading**

I Corinthians 2:9, 10, 13

Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. . . . Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

Paul is likely alluding to an Old Testament warning that the senses can't make God known to us (see [Isaiah 64:4](#))—but he affirms that God Himself does. One source suggests, “Only the man who is spiritual, i.e., dominated by God's self-revealing Spirit, by being actively receptive and obedient can comprehend God's gifts.”

Commentators interpret “comparing spiritual things with spiritual” as “combining spiritual truths with spiritual words” or “explaining (literally bringing together) spiritual revelations to spiritual men.”

I Corinthians 12:4–7

Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

In [verses 4–11](#), Paul teaches the complementary natures of diversity and unity among the faithful. For the apostle, harmony in Christian communities is paramount. But this unity of spirit doesn't imply uniformity, as he illustrates with the image of “members” of a body (see [vv. 12–27](#)).

“Each person is given something to do that shows who God is: Everyone gets in on it, everyone benefits,” paraphrases a scholar. He continues, “All these gifts have a common origin, but are handed out one by one by the one Spirit of God.”

diversities: great varieties

profit: provide a benefit or advantage

withal: with

I Corinthians 12:13

By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

For early Christians, baptism of converts not only signaled their regeneration but identified them as part of one community. Drinking communal wine emphasized unity of experience as well.

“Drink into one Spirit” expresses the symbolic meaning of drink—in this case, the imbibing of spiritual truth. A preeminent instance of this was the draft of wine taken at the last supper (see [Matthew 26:27](#)).

from **Section 1**

2 | [Isaiah 40:26](#)

Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth.

Captive Jews in Babylon were exposed to the belief that a pagan god created the world with the help of other gods. Here the writer portrays the vast host of stars and planets as an army under the direction of a powerful general—an image of God’s creative power, acknowledged as far beyond the supposed might of mythological deities.

In the ancient Near East, names indicated basic character and essence. God’s calling elements of creation by name confirms their distinct identities and His sovereignty over them. The Hebrew term translated *faileth* (*‘adar*) refers to lack; “not one faileth” declares that nothing is missing from the divine creation.

3 | [Job 26:13](#)

By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens.

garnished: made beautiful

Translation

3 | [Job 26:13, 14](#)

By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens; . . . Lo, these are parts of his ways: but how little a portion is heard of him?

• • •

*His Spirit made the heavens beautiful,
These are just the beginning of all that he does,
merely a whisper of his power.*

—New Living Translation

Translation

4 | [John 5:6](#)

It is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.

• • •

It is the [Holy] Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. [He is the essence and origin of truth itself.]

—Amplified® Bible

from **Section 2**

Translation

5 | [Job 33:4](#)

The spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life.

• • •

*God's spirit made me;
the Almighty's breath enlivens me.*

—Common English Bible

Translation

6 | Romans 8:14–16, 28

As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: . . . And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

• • •

The true children of God are those who let God’s Spirit lead them. The Spirit we received does not make us slaves again to fear; it makes us children of God. With that Spirit we cry out, “Father.” And the Spirit himself joins with our spirits to say we are God’s children. . . . We know that in everything God works for the good of those who love him. They are the people he called, because that was his plan.

—New Century Version

6 | Romans 8:16

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.

Central to early Christian teaching was the status of believers as children of God. Identity was no longer to be determined by human relationships or inheritance. The faithful would partake in the close relation to their creator that Christ Jesus exemplified as the Son of God. “And if children,” Paul continues in this letter, “then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ” (v. 17).

7 | II Corinthians 3:18

We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Paul has just depicted the Jews’ blindness to God’s Word as a veil: “Even unto this day . . . the veil is upon their heart” (3:15). Now, using the metaphor of a mirror, he describes the clarity of spiritual vision.

glass: mirror

Translation

7 | [II Corinthians 3:18](#)

We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

• • •

All of us are looking with unveiled faces at the glory of the Lord as if we were looking in a mirror. We are being transformed into that same image from one degree of glory to the next degree of glory. This comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

—Common English Bible

from **Section 3**

9 | [Romans 13:1](#)

There is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.

Roman Christians comprised a tiny minority living at the center of a huge empire. Here Paul is addressing the opinions they hold about state rule—ranging from the idea that followers of Christ owe no allegiance to anyone but God to the Zealot doctrine of violent rebellion against Rome. The apostle’s strong reminder that true authority is from God rebukes extremes of anarchism and insurrection.

Paul also urges respect for governing authorities as a way to honor divine order and justice. And he adds these specific directives: “Render therefore to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due; . . . Owe no man any thing, but to love one another” ([vv. 7, 8](#))—charges that accord with the teachings of Christ Jesus and the counsel of First Peter (see [Luke 6:35](#); [Mark 12:17](#); [I Peter 2:13–17](#)).

ordained: ordered; established

10 | [Ezekiel 13:3, 22](#)

Thus saith the Lord God; Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing! . . . With lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad.

Translation

This is what the Lord God says: How terrible it will be for the foolish prophets. They are the ones who follow their own ideas. And they have not seen a vision from me. . . . By your lies you caused the heart of the person who did right to be sad. I did not make him sad. You have encouraged the evil person not to stop being evil. And that would have saved his life.

—International Children’s Bible

Cautions against false prophets pervade the writings of nearly every Hebrew seer. Jeremiah records God’s words, “The prophets prophesy lies in my name: . . . they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart” ([Jeremiah 14:14](#)). And [Micah 3:7](#) foretells, “Then shall the seers be ashamed, and the diviners confounded.”

Ezekiel uses the prophetic introduction “Thus saith the Lord” to communicate God’s Word. But false prophets appropriated the phrase to give credence to their deceitful predictions. Jeremiah conveys God’s displeasure with this practice: “I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that use their tongues, and say, He saith” ([Jeremiah 23:31](#)).

In contrast to contemporary meanings of *sadness*, the Hebrew word translated *sad* in this verse (*ka’â*) can signify disheartened or cowed.

11 | [Psalms 107:14](#)

He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and brake their bands in sunder.

in sunder: apart

Translation

13 | [Ephesians 5:11](#)

Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.

• • •

Have nothing to do with the useless works that darkness produces. Instead, expose them for what they are.

—GOD’S WORD Translation

13 | Ephesians 5:11, 18

Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. . . . Be filled with the Spirit.

One commentary explains this admonition: “The warning is not only against the committing of such sins, but also against the toleration of them, against any continuing in fellowship with those who commit them. . . . A negative attitude of abstention from evil is not sufficient; the Christian must bring the light of his own nature (v. 8) to bear upon them.”

from Section 4

16 | Genesis 41:16, 29, 30, 33, 39, 40, 54

Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, . . . God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace. . . . Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt: and there shall arise after them seven years of famine; and all the plenty shall be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine shall consume the land. . . . Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt. . . . And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art: thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou. . . . And the seven years of dearth began to come, according as Joseph had said: and the dearth was in all lands; but in all the land of Egypt there was bread.

Because the Nile River provided plentiful water, droughts were uncommon in Egypt. But historical accounts confirm several famines related to lack of water from the 22nd to the 20th centuries BC . Under Joseph’s stewardship, Egypt supplied food for “all countries” (v. 57)—all the surrounding nations—during this famine.

Pharaoh was the title used by centuries of Egyptian monarchs. Meaning “great house,” the word originally alluded to the king’s palace. Not unlike references to national officials’ residences today—the White House or 10 Downing Street, for instance—the term became a way of designating the office holder.

famine: widespread scarcity of food

discreet: having good judgment

forasmuch as: in view of the fact that; seeing that; since

dearth: lack; shortage of food

from **Section 5**

Translation

18 | [Psalms 139:1, 5](#)

O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. . . . Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me.

• • •

Lord, you have examined me.

You know all about me. . . .

You are all around me—in front and in back.

You have put your hand on me.

—International Children’s Bible

20 | [Matthew 8:5–7](#)

When Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him, and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him.

For a Roman military officer to address a Hebrew as “Lord,” clearly accepting Jesus’ authority as a teacher and healer, was a notable act of courtesy from one representing Rome’s control over the Jewish population. He also demonstrates cultural sensitivity by not requiring Jesus to enter his home, an act that would make the Master ceremonially unclean under Mosaic law.

This is the first scriptural account in which faith is recognized by Jesus—and the first record of the healing of a Gentile. Jesus later commends the faith of another Gentile, the Canaanite woman who sought healing for her daughter (see [Matthew 15:28](#)). Other examples of faith appear in the Gospels, but here the Master endorses the confidence that needs no touch or outward sign in order to evoke trust in God. One source calls this man’s conviction “the no-nonsense faith of a practical man.”

The centurion’s humility has been compared to that of John the Baptist: The protest “I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof” uses the same wording as the Baptist’s prophecy of the advent of the Messiah, “whose shoes I am not worthy to bear” ([Matthew 3:11](#)).

centurion: commander of about a hundred soldiers in the ancient Roman army

grievously tormented: suffering severely

Translation

21 | [II Corinthians 5:8](#)

We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

• • •

Yes, we are fully confident, and we would rather be away from these earthly bodies, for then we will be at home with the Lord.

—New Living Translation

from **Section 6**

22 | [John 3:8](#)

The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

listeth: chooses; pleases

whence: from where

from **Section 7**

23 | [Isaiah 61:1](#)

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.

anointed: appointed for divine service

Translation

23 | [Isaiah 61:1, 3](#)

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted; to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; . . . to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.

• • •

*The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
Because the Lord has anointed and commissioned me
To bring good news to the humble and afflicted;
He has sent me to bind up [the wounds of] the
brokenhearted,
To proclaim release [from confinement and
condemnation] to the [physical and spiritual] captives
And freedom to prisoners, . . .
To grant to those who mourn in Zion the following:
To give them a turban instead of dust [on their heads,
a sign of mourning],
The oil of joy instead of mourning,
The garment [expressive] of praise instead of a
disheartened spirit.
So they will be called the trees of righteousness [strong*

and magnificent, distinguished for integrity, justice, and right standing with God],

The planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified.

—Amplified® Bible

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SHORT VERSION

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