



BIBLE LENS

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

Thanksgiving

from the **Responsive Reading**

[Psalms 107:1, 9](#)

O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. . . . For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.

endureth: is lasting

longing: yearning or strongly desiring

[Psalms 107:35, 36](#)

He turneth the wilderness into a standing water, and dry ground into watersprings. And there he maketh the hungry to dwell, that they may prepare a city for habitation.

standing water: still water, such as a pool

habitation: place to live

from **Section 1**

1 | [Psalms 147:7–9, 14, 15](#)

Sing unto the Lord with thanksgiving; sing praise upon the harp unto our God: who covereth the heaven with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains. He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry. . . . He maketh peace in thy borders, and filleth thee with the finest of the wheat. He sendeth forth his commandment upon earth: his word runneth very swiftly.

Translation

Sing praises to the Lord.

Praise our God with harps.

He fills the sky with clouds.

He sends rain to the earth.

He makes grass grow on the hills.

He gives food to cattle

and to the little birds that call. . . .

He brings peace to your country.

He fills you with the finest grain.

He gives a command to the earth,

and it quickly obeys him.

—International Children’s Bible

“The psalmist sang because he must,” a scholar writes, “as a man conscious of the goodness of God. And that goodness he expressed in vivid pictures.” Another observes: “Thanksgiving follows praise, for when one declares God’s attributes and works, he cannot help but be thankful. Praise leads regularly to thanksgiving.”

ravens: large black birds

3 | Psalms 40:11

Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O Lord: let thy lovingkindness and thy truth continually preserve me.

Translation

LORD , do not withhold Your compassion from me;

Your constant love and truth will always guard me.

Rahmîm, the Hebrew noun meaning mercies, is almost always rendered *tender mercies* in the psalms. It is related to *rehem*, the Hebrew term for *womb*, implying the solicitous cherishing given an unborn child. Elsewhere it appears as *compassions* (see example in [Lamentations 3:22](#)).

4 | [Psalms 92:1](#)

It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High.

In Jewish worship, thanksgiving to God was inseparable from glorifying and honoring Him. In fact, no independent word for *thanks* exists in the Old Testament. The Hebrew term translated *thanks* here and many other places (*yādâ*) also signifies praise, laud, and revere.

5 | [Isaiah 63:7](#)

I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his lovingkindnesses.

Translation

*I will recount the LORD's faithful acts;
I will sing the LORD's praises,
because of all the LORD did for us,
for God's great favor toward the house of Israel.
God treated them compassionately
and with deep affection.*

—Common English Bible

bestowed: presented; gave

from **Section 2**

6 | [Joel 2:21, 24, 26](#)

Be glad and rejoice: for the Lord will do great things. . . . And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the vats shall overflow with wine and oil. . . . And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you.

After multiple calamities in Judah—a plague of locusts, a famine, and a drought—Hebrew prophet Joel has exhorted the Israelites to turn to God in repentance (see 1:2–2:17). Now he outlines great blessings, reversing every disaster for God’s penitent people.

floors: hard surfaces where grain is separated

vats: large containers for liquids

7 | Psalms 77:13, 20

Who is so great a God as our God? . . . Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

Translation

*Is there any god as mighty as you? . . .
You led your people along that road like a flock of sheep,
with Moses and Aaron as their shepherds.*

—New Living Translation

8 | Exodus 16:2–4, 6, 7, 8, 13–15

The whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness: and the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger. Then said the Lord unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; . . . And Moses and Aaron said unto all the children of Israel, At even, then ye shall know that the Lord hath brought you out from the land of Egypt: and in the morning, then ye shall see the glory of the Lord; for that he heareth your murmurings against the Lord: and what are we, that ye murmur against us? . . . Your murmurings are not against us, but against the Lord. . . . And it came to pass, that at even the quails came up, and covered the camp: and in the morning the dew lay round about the host. And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground. And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat.

Understandably, the children of Israel look to their leaders when in want—but Moses points them back to Yahweh, who delivered them from bondage in Egypt. A Bible authority suggests: “The Lord used this grumbling as an opportunity to educate the people in walking in trust and following instructions The Lord’s plan was to form this assembly into a people who would bless the world through the way they lived. God was preparing them for the more comprehensive instruction (*torah*) at Sinai.”

murmured: complained

assembly: gathering of people

host: large number of people

manna: a kind of food supplied for the Israelites

wist: knew

from **Section 3**

10 | [Psalms 42:11](#)

Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

The Hebrew word *y^e šû’â*, translated *health* here, is rendered *help* in the nearly identical refrain of [verse 5](#). Its most common translation is *salvation*—and it is the Hebrew name for Jesus.

11 | [Luke 4:14](#)

Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about.

Translation

Then Jesus returned to Galilee, filled with the Holy Spirit’s power. Reports about him spread quickly through the whole region.

—New Living Translation

12 | [Luke 17:12–16](#)

As he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: and they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he

saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan.

While Hebrew law required lepers only to refrain from touching others and to proclaim their status aloud, by Jesus' time they weren't allowed within city limits at all. These ten lived in the borderlands between Samaria and Galilee.

Leprosy colonies apparently brought about unusual alliances. In this case, even though Hebrews and Samaritans had deep differences that bred hatred, the Jewish and Samaritan lepers were bound together by their shared experience of suffering and ostracism.

Jesus instructs the men to show themselves to the priests, who had legal authority to approve their readmission to the community—a clear call for faith before healing takes place. And he commends the faith of the one who returns to give thanks (see v. 19).

13 | **Philippians 1:3, 6, 9–11**

I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, . . . being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ: . . . And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

Translation

I thank my God for all the memories I have of you. . . . I'm convinced that God, who began this good work in you, will carry it through to completion on the day of Christ Jesus. . . . I pray that your love will keep on growing because of your knowledge and insight. That way you will be able to determine what is best and be pure and blameless until the day of Christ. Jesus Christ will fill your lives with everything that God's approval produces. Your lives will then bring glory and praise to God.

—GOD'S WORD Translation

Paul's letter to the Philippians is addressed to a church he had founded with Timothy and Silas a decade before. Now Paul is in detention, likely in Rome and possibly in chains (see v. 7). Yet his opening expression of joy is repeated throughout the epistle. "Such joy arises," notes a commentary, "not from his circumstances or those of the Philippians, but from a deep-seated trust in the reliability of God"

“The day of Christ” refers to the return of the Savior to earth—an event thought to be imminent by many early Christians. Meanwhile, the faithful are to grow their love through increased spiritual perception. “Christian love,” another source points out, “is not mere sentiment; it is rooted in knowledge and understanding.”

abound: be plentiful

offence (offense): wrongdoing

from **Section 4**

14 | [Colossians 3:4, 12, 14, 15](#)

When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. . . . Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; . . . And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

Here readers are called “the elect of God, holy and beloved.” Assuming the letter to have been written by Paul (a subject debated among scriptural authorities), a scholar explains: “The significant thing is that every one of these three words [*elect, holy, beloved*] originally belonged . . . to the Jews. They were the chosen people; they were the dedicated nation; they were the beloved of God. Paul takes these three precious words which had once been the possession of Israel and gives them to the Gentiles. Thereby he shows that God’s love and grace have gone out to the ends of the earth, and that there is no ‘most favored nation’ clause in his economy.”

Of all the virtues listed in this chapter, love is identified as “the bond of perfectness,” the bond that ties the virtues—and believers—together. A paraphrase has, “Most of all, let love guide your life, for then the whole church will stay together in perfect harmony.”

Giving thanks is a strong theme in this letter (thankfulness is mentioned six times; see also [1:3](#), [12](#); [2:7](#); [3:17](#); [4:2](#)). In [verse 15](#), it is presented not as one more virtue, but as a directive: Live thankfully.

bowels: inward parts; inner source of tenderness

15 | [Ephesians 5:2](#)

Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour.

Translation

Live a life of love just as Christ loved us and gave himself for us as a sweet-smelling offering and sacrifice to God.

—New Century Version

savour (savor): fragrance

15 | Ephesians 5:18–20

Be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

From earliest times, singing was a traditional way to honor God. Specific songs of thanksgiving are attributed to Moses, Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, and Mary, the mother of Jesus (see [Exodus 15:1–21](#) ; [Judges, chap. 5](#) ; [I Samuel 2:1–10](#) ; [Luke 1:46–55](#))—and dozens of psalms urge singing as a voicing of praise to God. Though the three terms (*psalms, hymns, spiritual songs*) may indicate different forms of music, the encouragement to sing is unmistakable.

Several exhortations to song are recorded in the New Testament—including the similar charge in [Colossians 3:16](#) about “teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” And [James 5:13](#) recommends: “Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms.”

A commentator says, “The grumbling spirit is not compatible with the Holy Spirit. . . . The Spirit-filled believer is full not of complaining, but of thanksgiving.”

16 | Hebrews 13:15

Let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.

Translation

. . . let us constantly and at all times offer up to God a sacrifice of praise, which is the fruit of lips that thankfully acknowledge and confess and glorify His name.

—Amplified® Bible Classic

In Hebrew custom, animals and harvest fruits were offered to atone for wrongdoing or to thank God for His goodness. One source clarifies, “The ancient peoples sometimes argued that a thank-offering was more acceptable to God than a sin-offering, for when a man offered a sin-offering he was trying to get something for himself, while a thank-offering was the unconditional offering of the grateful heart.”

Hebrew Scripture occasionally describes praise and thanksgiving themselves as sacrifices. In [Psalms 50:13, 14](#) , for instance, God contrasts the sacrifice of animals with that of thanks: “Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows to the most High.”

Read a related kids’ article, [“Sally’s garden”](#) by Isobel Anne Anable.



The Bible Lessons serve as weekly study guides as well as the sermon in every Christian Science Sunday church service. Learn more at [BibleLesson.com](https://www.biblelesson.com).

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