



BIBLE LENS

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

God the Preserver of Man

June 7–13, 2021

from the **Golden Text**

Deuteronomy 33:12

The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him; and the Lord shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between his shoulders.

Near the end of his life, Moses blesses each of the tribes of Israel. Verse 12, the benediction on the tribe of Benjamin, is an affirmation of safety that may have geographical as well as symbolic meaning.

Katēf, the Hebrew term rendered *shoulders* in this verse, can refer to the slope of a hill or mountainside. Because Zion, where Jehovah was believed to dwell, was in the land of Benjamin, some scholars see *shoulders* as an allusion to that habitation. One writes, “Jehovah is here said to dwell between Benjamin’s shoulders, i.e., mountain slopes.”

Most sources, though, link the word *shoulders* with God’s protection rather than Benjamin’s location. And while they may view shoulders in a bodily way—as a child is held close to a parent’s chest or on a parent’s back—the metaphor imparts a sense of God’s protecting presence. This assertion is underscored by the Hebrew verb rendered *cover* (*hāpap*), signifying overshadow.

from the **Responsive Reading**

Psalms 18:19

He brought me forth also into a large place; he delivered me, because he delighted in me.

In Psalms, God’s salvation is described as bringing His children into a broad or expansive space (see [31:8](#); [118:5](#)). Another example occurs in Job: “Even so would he have removed thee out of the strait into a broad place, where there is no straitness” ([36:16](#)). A commentary depicts this place as “a state of freedom, and plenty, and comfort.”

[Psalm 18](#) appears nearly word for word in [Second Samuel 22](#). Its fifty-verse voicing of praise for divine deliverance promises redemption for the entire Israelite community—and by extension, for everyone needing spiritual aid in the face of adversity.

from **Section 1**

1 | [Isaiah 40:11](#)

He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.

Translation

He takes care of his people like a shepherd.

*He gathers them like lambs in his arms
and carries them close to him.*

He gently leads the mothers of the lambs.

—New Century Version

Kings of the ancient Near East were frequently regarded as shepherds of their people. In the same way, Hebrew Scripture portrays God as the shepherding ruler of Israel (see other instances in [Psalms 23:1](#); [80:1](#); [Jeremiah 31:10](#); [Ezekiel 34:11–15](#)). This image was a tender reminder of God’s care for His people.

Shepherds were vital to early economies, protecting sheep from harm, keeping them from wandering or falling behind the flock, and carrying injured sheep to support them. Jesus’ parable of the lost sheep offers a similar word picture: “When he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing” ([Luke 15:5](#)).

3 | [Psalms 121:5, 7, 8](#)

The Lord is thy keeper: the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. . . . The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.

Under the intense desert sun, shade represented protection. This metaphor for spiritual shelter appears throughout the Old Testament, elsewhere expressed by the word *shadow* (see examples in [Isaiah 25:4](#); [51:16](#)). “Upon thy right hand” points to the position of a protector, covering the unshielded side of a warrior.

“Thy going out and thy coming in” was a Hebrew phrase encompassing the whole of life—much like the promise in [Deuteronomy 28:6](#), “Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out.”

keeper: protector, guard, or caregiver

preserve: save from injury or destruction; defend from evil

from **Section 2**

Translation

4 | [II Timothy 1:7, 9, 10](#)

God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. . . . Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

•••

God didn't give us a spirit that is timid but one that is powerful, loving, and self-controlled. . . . God is the one who saved and called us with a holy calling. This wasn't based on what we have done, but it was based on his own purpose and grace that he gave us in Christ Jesus before time began. Now his grace is revealed through the appearance of our savior, Christ Jesus. He destroyed death and brought life and immortality into clear focus through the good news.

—Common English Bible

After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come. . . . And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. He said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.

Satan's demise is reported several times in Scripture, using varied names. [Isaiah 14:12](#) proclaims, "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!" John's Gospel says, "Now shall the prince of this world be cast out" ([John 12:31](#)). And [Revelation 12:9](#) announces, "The great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." (Some other biblical terms for Satan are *accuser, adversary, Beelzebub, enemy, tempter, and the god of this world.*)

tread: step or walk

notwithstanding: in spite of this; nevertheless

from **Section 3**

Translation

7 | [Romans 1:16](#)

I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.

•••

. . . I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes

—New Living Translation

8 | [Acts 15:40](#)

Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God.

Silas (called Silvanus elsewhere in the New Testament) was valued as a Roman citizen and a representative of the Christian community in Jerusalem. Like Timothy, he was a close companion and supporter of Paul and his missionary efforts. In addition to traveling with Paul to young churches, he took other missionary trips. [Acts 15:32](#), for example, records Silas' work at Antioch with a companion named Judas: "Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them."

9 | [Acts 16:16–20](#)

It came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying: the same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation. And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour. And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the marketplace unto the rulers, and brought them to the magistrates.

Whatever the source of this enslaved girl's ability (attributed to madness, ventriloquism, or possession by pagan gods), her declaration proves to be true. Both she and the Roman jailer experience regeneration and healing.

Paul's ministry in Macedonia, one source remarks, includes three separate strata of society: Lydia (see [vv. 14, 15](#)) was from the upper social class; the captive girl, from the bottom; and the jailer, from the middle. Lydia and the jailer are baptized into the faith and provide Christian hospitality to Paul and Silas (see [vv. 15, 33, 34](#)).

divination, soothsaying: predicting the future by supernatural means

gain: money; profit

magistrates: officers who act as judges

9 | [Acts 16:23](#)

When they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely.

It was illegal to punish Roman citizens with this harsh treatment (also mentioned in [Second Corinthians 11:23, 24](#))—especially without a trial. But Paul and Silas apparently did not divulge their Roman status until after their release (see [Acts 16:37](#)). The abuse and incarceration they endured, however, led to their remarkable divine deliverance.

The marketplace, where this punishment took place, was the social and political heart of the city. Citizens gathered there to exchange ideas and goods—and to bring charges against accused criminals to Roman officials.

9 | [Acts 16:27–35](#)

The keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here. Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house. And when it was day, the magistrates sent the sergeants, saying, Let those men go.

Roman soldiers were held responsible for their prisoners and severely punished or even executed if their charges escaped. Aghast at the freed captives, this man was ready to take his own life. (Soldiers voice fears about this in [Acts 27:42](#), citation 12, as well.)

A commentary suggests that the jailer’s conversion parallels Paul’s experience. The apostle’s question on the Damascus road—“Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?”—is echoed by the jailer: “What must I do to be saved?” And Paul’s response stems from his own dramatic shift from hostility to devotion: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”

from **Section 4**

10 | [II Corinthians 4:1](#)

Seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not.

Translation

God, with his mercy, gave us this work to do. So we don't give up.

—International Children’s Bible

Ministry is translated from the Greek term *diakonia*, source of the English word *deacon*. It refers to service—waiting upon someone as a host or a servant. For Christians, its sense is elevated, indicating the momentous work of preaching and healing. As Paul has just explained, God “hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit” (3:6). Later in this epistle, he lays out the challenges and rewards of this ministry (see [6:4–10](#), citation 11).

11 | [II Corinthians 6:4, 5, 10](#)

In all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings; . . . as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

Translation

. . . in every way we show that we are servants of God: in accepting many hard things, in troubles, in difficulties, and in great problems. We are beaten and thrown into prison. Men become upset and fight us. We work hard, and sometimes we get no sleep or food. . . . We have much sadness, but we are always rejoicing. We are poor, but we are making many people rich in faith. We have nothing, but really we have everything.

—International Children’s Bible

Paul’s catalog of trials may sound daunting. Yet a scriptural authority observes, “Seen from the vantage point of God’s ultimate redemptive purposes, sorrow and grief do not have the last word; joy and rejoicing do.”

12 | [Acts 27:21–24, 41, 42](#)

After long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss. And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man’s life among you, but of the ship. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Cæsar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. . . . And falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground. And the soldiers’ counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out, and escape.

abstinence: holding back or waiting to do something

Caesar: Roman emperor

aground: stranded in shallow water

counsel: advice

from **Section 5**

13 | [Acts 28:3, 5](#)

When Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand. . . . And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm.

viper: poisonous snake

Translation

14 | I Timothy 4:12, 16

*Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. . . .
Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save
thyself, and them that hear thee.*

•••

*. . . be an example to the believers with your words, your actions, your love, your faith, and your pure life.
. . . Be careful in your life and in your teaching. If you continue to live and teach rightly, you will save
both yourself and those who listen to you.*

—New Century Version

from **Section 6**

15 | II Corinthians 4:15, 17, 18

*All things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory
of God. . . . For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal
weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things
which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

Translation

*All of this is for your benefit. And as God's grace reaches more and more people, there will be great
thanksgiving, and God will receive more and more glory. . . . For our present troubles are small and won't
last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever! So we
don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the
things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.*

—New Living Translation

Skopeō, the Greek word translated *look*, describes having an aim or goal. Distinct from other Greek words for *look*, this term implies deep and purposeful consideration.

A related noun signifying goal (*skopos*, source of the English noun *scope*) occurs in Paul’s message to the Philippians: “I press toward the mark [*skopos*] for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (3:14).

redound: contribute greatly

16 | II Corinthians 5:20

Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us.

Translation

Therefore, we are Christ’s representatives, and through us God is calling you. . . .

—GOD’S WORD Translation

Believers’ work as ambassadors—“workers together” with Christ (6:1, citation 17)—is to convey the good news that humanity is able to be reconciled to God. In the only other biblical use of the term, the writer of Ephesians calls himself an ambassador “to make known the mystery of the gospel” (see [Ephesians 6:19, 20](#)).

17 | II Corinthians 6:1, 2

We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)

Translation

*Since we are God’s coworkers, we urge you not to
let God’s kindness be wasted on you. God says,
“At the right time I heard you.
On the day of salvation I helped you.”
Listen, now is God’s acceptable time! Now is the day of
salvation!*

—GOD’S WORD Translation

Beseech is translated from the Greek word *parakaleō*, meaning not only entreaty but also comfort. According to one scholar, it can connote “inviting others to do or receive something thought beneficial.” Paul’s heartfelt appeal is unquestionably intended for the good of his readers.

Paul undergirds his plea to “receive not the grace of God in vain” by citing [Isaiah 49:8](#): “In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee.” Sources consider this a stirring proclamation that the long-awaited Messiah has arrived—that salvation is available to everyone, here and now.

18 | II Corinthians 9:8, 11

God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work: . . . being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God.

sufficiency: enough to meet one’s needs

abound to: have more than enough for

bountifulness: abundance

Read a related testimony, “[‘The Lord shall cover him’](#)” by Gail Bernard.



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

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