



CHRISTIAN SCIENCE Sentinel

What I say unto you I say unto all, watch. — Jesus

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The power of love

Lisa Rennie Sytsma

That’s the theme of numerous songs, movies, books, podcasts, sermons, and, of course, articles—including this one! And rightfully so. People feel intuitively that love is a powerful thing. We yearn for it and feel its lack intensely when we think we don’t have it. We hear of heroic efforts and sacrifices people make out of love for others—sometimes for those they don’t even know.

So why, when faced with an enemy, do we so often push love aside as a solution, believing aggression or violence to be the only option for overcoming a challenge to our or others’ well-being, safety, or rights—even though thinkers throughout history have insisted that love is the only thing that can actually save us?

Almost two thousand years ago, Christ Jesus said in his monumental Sermon on the Mount: “Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:43–45). Centuries later, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in his sermon titled “Loving Your Enemies,” cited Jesus’ admonition and added, “It is love that will save our world and our civilization, love even for enemies.”

Dr. King, who was so intimately and personally acquainted with one of mankind’s greatest evils, racism, was nevertheless convinced that love, lived through loving even one’s enemies, was an actual power able to overcome bigotry in individuals and unjust laws in government. And his conviction was based on the life and teachings of the man he called “our Lord and Master,” Jesus.

We have no record of Jesus seeking power through either political alliances or material strength and weaponry. In fact, the Bible records that Jesus more

than once rejected opportunities to take political power. And when one of his disciples tried to prevent Jesus’ arrest by injuring one of those who had come to seize him, Jesus healed the man and told the disciple to put away his sword. As the Son of the one, omnipotent God, who is Love itself, he didn’t need weapons or political power to give him dominion over storms, conflict, sin, disease, or even death. In fact, after his resurrection from death, he said to his disciples, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth” (Matthew 28:18). Not *some* power—all.

Jesus’ faithful obedience to his own command shines through his life. We have no record of him ever returning evil for evil, even when efforts were made to kill him, yet he and his followers were safe from those efforts (see, for example, Luke 4:28–30).

But how do we obey Jesus’ command when what confronts us appears to be an aggressive and powerful enemy? It can feel hard to discipline our thought to stand with God in seeing such individuals (or groups) as His children, the offspring of divine Love. But the benefits of doing just that have been attested to not just by Bible accounts but by the lives of countless followers of Jesus today.

For example, a Christian Scientist saw a stranger beating a woman on a deserted street and began running toward them. Although not sure what he could do to help physically, he demanded of himself that he deny the evidence of violence before him and replace it with the understanding that every one of God’s children is truly spiritual—the image and likeness of God, Spirit—and reflects God’s kindness, harmony, and safety. As he got to them, he firmly said, “Stop.” The attacker let the woman go and turned aggressively toward him. With a conviction that came from genuine love, the Christian Scientist said, “This isn’t who you are.” The man’s face changed. “Sorry,” he said. “I forgot myself.” The woman had already run away, but the Christian Scientist spent a few moments with the man, quietly explaining how God’s love could help him be better. The man thanked him and left. The Christian Scientist never heard any more of either the attacker or the woman—but both the woman and the Christian Scientist were safe, and the attacker had been blessed as well.

Mary Baker Eddy, the Discoverer of Christian Science, wrote, “Jesus aided in reconciling man to God by giving man a truer sense of Love, the divine Principle of Jesus’ teachings, and this truer sense of Love redeems man from the law of matter, sin, and death by the law of Spirit,—the law of divine Love” (*Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, p. 19). Nothing in this statement asks us to ignore wrongdoing. Rather, it calls for just the opposite: that we recognize the power of Love, God—and of our acknowledgment and expression of that Love—to correct whatever needs correcting.

As we celebrate Dr. King in the United States this week, remembering the tremendous good he accomplished, we rejoice in his proof of the power of genuine love to bring healing and redemption to individuals and to society in general. We remember that he gained that love through his deep Christianity and faithfulness to the teachings of Christ Jesus. He said of Jesus’ command to love our enemies, “The words of this text glitter in our eyes with a new urgency.” They still do. Let’s let that command enrich our thought, our actions, and our lives. We have so many examples of the power of loving our enemies to change things for the good. Our world needs the blessings that obedience to Jesus’ command must bring.

Lisa Rennie Sytsma, Associate Editor

ARTICLES

The faith we have is enough

God gives us everything needed to forward our progress and well-being.

Karen Neff

If you ever feel that your faith is too small, or even completely lacking, take heart. Even Jesus’ disciples—those who had not only witnessed his amazing healing works but received his direct teaching and guidance—

often grappled with a lack of faith. Calling attention to their deficit of trust in God, Jesus admonished them, “O ye of little faith” (see, for instance, Matthew 8:26).

One day this apparent rebuke spoke to me less as a reprimand and more as a gentle reminder to trust the faith in God that I already had, no matter how small it seemed. It was saying to me, “You *have* a little faith. Now just trust it and use it.” This inspired thought was consistent with Jesus’ teaching on the occasion when he assured his followers, “If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you” (Matthew 17:20).

His emphasis on the size of the seed is noteworthy, since a mustard seed is particularly tiny. From this it can be deduced that even a minuscule faith in God, Spirit, is still infinitely greater—and truer—than any aspect of the erroneous belief that life is material. It’s like a scale in which any faith on the side of divine Spirit outweighs faith in materiality—from which springs trouble in the form of illness, lack, and turmoil. Even a grain of faith on God’s side has more genuine substance and power than all the doubts and fears that inevitably accompany reliance upon a material sense of existence. The choice of where to place our faith is ours to make.

But is faith self-generated? No. Faith is an aspect of spiritual sense—our innate, God-given ability not only to understand God but to feel with all our heart that we trust Him. Our faith in God actually comes from God, the source of all being; it is one of the good and perfect gifts that come from above (see James 1:17) and is a strong support when seeking healing for ourselves and others. At the root of every problem is the belief that existence and substance are material. But God gives His children faith and understanding to erase the fears and false beliefs that would have us doubt His good government of and provision for our lives. He gives us everything needed to forward our progress and well-being.

The Discoverer of Christian Science, Mary Baker Eddy, deemed faith important enough to open the first chapter of *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* with the statement, “The prayer that reforms the sinner and

heals the sick is an absolute faith that all things are possible to God . . .” (p. 1). But how often do we ignore this directive or concede a lack of faith in God’s ability to heal or to restore harmony?

There was a time when, after a period of trying circumstances, I lamented what I perceived to be my loss of faith. I felt heartsick and shed many tears. Then one day, while I was deep in prayer, this statement from *Science and Health* came to me: “The history of Christianity furnishes sublime proofs of the supporting influence and protecting power bestowed on man by his heavenly Father, omnipotent Mind, who gives man faith and understanding whereby to defend himself, not only from temptation, but from bodily suffering” (p. 387). The whole statement was strengthening, but what really stood out were the words “Mind, who gives man faith.” Instantly I realized that because God, the one Mind—the Mind of every one of us—gave all His children faith in Him, I had it and could never lose it. With this came the realization that the faith God gives isn’t fatalistic or blind but replete with spiritual understanding and inspiration. I wept tears of joy as this recognition of the true source and nature of faith dawned.

The patriarch Abraham is an inspiring example of faith. The Bible tells us that Abraham came from a wealthy family and had enjoyed a privileged upbringing. Yet when God called him to pack up and leave his home and relatives, even though he had no idea where God, Love, was sending him, he was unquestioningly obedient. *Science and Health* explains that Abraham “illustrated the purpose of Love to create trust in good” (p. 579). It was Abraham’s complete faith in God that kept him well and moving forward under Love’s guidance, even though there seemed to be no human reason for the actions he was directed to take. The rewards for his obedience included long life and great prosperity.

What a blessing to know that this is also true for us. Divine Love’s purpose for each of us is to create and uphold trust in good. We may feel that our faith is too small and weak, but we can know that whatever faith we have is enough because it comes from God and is

supported by Love’s infinite power to heal and bless. That is a fact we can trust!

In all simplicity

Carolyn M. Hook

Originally published for the Christian Science Sentinel online on August 16, 2024

At first
I prayed to know
That God is greater,
Love is greater—far, far greater—
Than all the taunts
Of hate, destruction, fear:
Than all their shouts,
Than all their claims,
However loud they seem to be.

But “Wait a moment,”
“Pause a moment,”
“Pray again,” I heard.

And then light dawned:
Not “greater than,”
For God is All,
So Love is All,
And nothing else can be.

Staff and rod

God, good, is always with us and lovingly cares for us along our way with comfort, strength, and good solutions.

Doris Ulich

Originally published in German

The path was steep. And it kept on being steep. I had barely reached one plateau before the next climb began. The higher I climbed, the more my joy in the beautiful, sunny surroundings declined. It got to the point that my exhaustion turned to panic and was telling me, “And you’re not even close to the halfway point for this stage of the tour!”

This was on day two of a weeklong hike. That morning, like every day, I had renewed my supply of fresh spiritual ideas before having breakfast. Because even though I want to keep my gear light, the Full-Text Edition of the *Christian Science Quarterly* has to be included. This booklet gives citations from the Bible and Mary Baker Eddy’s book, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, that make up a Bible Lesson for each week. The Lesson gives me inspiration and strength through examples of God’s care and love, motivating, encouraging, and, yes, admonishing me, so that, with God’s help, I can be strong and move forward in life.

But in that moment of great need, my thinking was so clouded by strain and struggle that none of these uplifting thoughts seemed to be present, only the need. Looking back, I can say that I let myself become fixated on thoughts such as “It’s so hot. There’s still so far to go, and I’m just not strong enough.”

And then right in front of me, in the middle of the path through the scree, I saw a branch. I picked it up without hesitation. It fit my hand perfectly and was exactly the right length for me to lean on like a trekking pole. I was filled with deep relief and felt I had received a gift, and the dark clouds of exhaustion and frustration dissolved completely.

Isn’t this comfort described perfectly in the 23rd Psalm, which says of God, “Thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me” (verse 4)? The shepherd’s rod and staff don’t just support him; they help him lead the sheep on the way to pastures and through dark valleys. The shepherd knows the way, and he never lets his sheep lack anything. Confident of this, the sheep follow the shepherd, even along rugged paths.

This staff that I was holding restored the confidence in my heart that the comfort given in that psalm is true and that I could experience it in a way that would

strengthen me. David, the author, was a shepherd. He knew the qualities of a good shepherd, and in this particular psalm, he related them very vividly to God’s ever-presence and guidance and to His caring and uplifting comfort.

With this support, I was prepared to again receive Christ messages, thoughts that contain the divinely good, true, and perfect. In this instance, the message consisted of two quotations that had struck me particularly as I was reading the Bible Lesson that morning. One is from Paul and says, “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (II Corinthians 6:2). This word *now* is always valid, even when we’re hiking through a dark valley. The day of salvation is now—and that isn’t the day of giving up, helplessness, or worry. Now is the day when what presents itself as unacceptable will change. Now is filled with the presence of God, because God, good, is always with us and lovingly cares for us along our way with comfort, strength, and good solutions.

The second quotation is from *Science and Health*: “In Christian Science, Spirit, as a proper noun, is the name of the Supreme Being. It means quantity and quality, and applies exclusively to God” (p. 93). It was the words *quantity* and *quality* that were resonating with me. The worried counting of kilometers and meters above sea level didn’t have anything to do with the abundance that was coming from God, Spirit. That worry obscured the quality of the divine creation surrounding me and that I was part of, equipped with ability and strength. Spirit does not know limitation, because Spirit is infinite. And right now was when I could relate that fact to myself, His child, His beloved and empowered image and likeness.

The result was that for the rest of that stage I was able to think clearly and to pray, to follow the Shepherd, God, and then to reach the goal for that stage (which included a well-laid table) with joy and gratitude. In the following days, I hiked on glorious heights—which is where my thoughts were, as well. The Bible Lesson with its strengthening and inspiring messages continued to accompany me, and every day it was my rod and my staff, leaving me well equipped.

I am so grateful to Mary Baker Eddy for establishing these Bible Lessons, which have a message that always accompanies, strengthens, and guides us with uplifting truths wherever we go. This message was present with me in the darkest moment of my hike, even though I wasn't aware of it. That shows that limiting thoughts cannot endure in the presence of the Supreme Being, God, Spirit, who now, in this acceptable time, is filling all space with love, so that we can receive comfort and strength at every moment.

It was nice to be able to lean on that stick while I was hiking, but what's much more valuable to me is that, wherever I go, I always have with me the certainty of a practical staff and rod in what the Bible Lesson is revealing.

Image and Inspiration

Corporeal sense, or error, may seem to hide Truth, health, harmony, and Science, as the mist obscures the sun or the mountain; but Science, the sunshine of Truth, will melt away the shadow and reveal the celestial peaks.

—Mary Baker Eddy, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, p. 299

Photograph by David Tinsley
Mesa, Arizona, US

The sun breaking through clouds over Antarctica

Protected from wildfire

I stayed with the reassuring thought that God's work is done and that His perfect creation is secure in His care.

Esther Lambertson

Originally published for the Christian Science Sentinel online on August 15, 2024

One Thanksgiving holiday (celebrated in late November in the United States), I drove to the San Diego area to spend time with my daughter and her family.

They live in a picturesque, hilly rural area about fifteen miles inland from the ocean. The weather is warm during the day, but a strong breeze almost always comes up in the afternoon, so the evenings and nights are usually pleasant.

We attended church on Thanksgiving morning and then came home to have an early holiday dinner. As we were cleaning up after our meal, we noticed a patch of orange smoke rising from behind the hill across from ours. The afternoon wind had kicked up, and soon the entire ridge line was ablaze. The wind was blowing the smoke and ash right at us, and our daughter's home was soon engulfed in thick smoke. We heard sirens wailing and saw helicopters and a small plane overhead dropping water and fire retardant. It was a frightening and mesmerizing situation.

I turned away from the scene and went to my room for prayer time with God. I was led to pick up that week's Bible Lesson from the *Christian Science Quarterly*. My eyes fell on this verse from the Bible: "Hearken unto this, O Job: stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God" (Job 37:14). I knew that this was a message from God.

I considered and felt grateful for all of God's creation—the variety of birds, the lovely hills dotted with huge boulders, the vast vistas toward the ocean, the sky and its varying cloud formations, and all the wildlife in the area. As I rejoiced in God's "wondrous works," these verses from the first two chapters of Genesis came to mind: "And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good" and "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them" (1:31; 2:1).

A sense of peace and comfort came over me as I realized that God's work is *done*. This indicated to me how unlikely it was that after creating all these "wondrous works," God would later decide to create forces that could destroy His "very good" creation.

By that time, the house was completely covered in ash. I could barely see the trees directly outside the window for the smoke. My son-in-law said we'd been ordered to evacuate as soon as possible. I continued to know that God maintains His perfect creation, and I felt no fear.

As I put necessities into my car, I stayed with the reassuring thought that God's work is done and that His perfect creation is secure in His care. During one of my trips to the car, I noticed that there was no more smoke. The wind had died down and completely reversed course, turning into a breeze that gently blew the smoke back in the direction from which it had come. Before long, we were notified that firefighters had stopped the progress of the flames, and there was no need to evacuate.

Soon, it was dark, and we could see the lighted ridge line and the firefighters at work putting out the hot spots. No homes had been damaged. We all went to bed assured that all was in God's hands.

In the morning, we awoke to discover that it had rained during the night. The rain had completely extinguished the remainder of the flames and washed away all the ash covering homes, cars, and surroundings—leaving almost no evidence around us that there had even been a fire.

I'm so grateful for the blessings from a lifetime of studying and practicing Christian Science and for the many proofs I've had that "divine Love always has met and always will meet every human need" (Mary Baker Eddy, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, p. 494).

Finding my way back to Christian Science

Avery Stewart

Originally appeared online in the teen series *Your Healings*; November 5, 2024.

I grew up attending Christian Science Sunday School, but at the beginning of my junior year in high school, it was the last place I wanted to be. I made excuses to avoid attending Wednesday evening testimony meetings at church, and I rolled my eyes when my parents brought up anything related to Christian Science. I didn't feel I could talk to them about it, because I thought I would let them down if I told them I wasn't sure about Christian Science.

While I continued to feel disconnected from Christian Science, everything else felt like it was falling apart, too. My schoolwork was challenging and overwhelming; I wasn't progressing in my sport; and by Christmas break, one of my closest friendships had ended. When my friend reached out, we worked things out enough that we could be friendly. But I found it hard to forgive her.

My relationship with my boyfriend also felt rocky. At first, we put things on pause. A little while later, we broke up. I was very upset and felt betrayed and alone.

Then, one of my friends who's a Christian Scientist suggested that we listen together to a testimony meeting, which includes readings from the Bible and from *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy along with testimonies of healing and insights from attendees' individual practice of Christian Science. I was hesitant because I hadn't been to a testimony meeting in so long. But I ended up listening in.

The main idea I got from the readings was that God supplies us with everything we need and that true fulfillment comes from knowing God. It was just what

I needed to hear. I realized for the first time that I don't have to rely on relationships, people, grades, or anything else to feel fulfilled.

After the service, I looked up a verse from the Bible that had been included. It says, "For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee" (Isaiah 54:7). This showed me that even if I'd felt that I was separated from God and couldn't reach out to Him, He was still there, loving and caring for me. If I didn't feel I was specifically hearing God's voice, that didn't mean God wasn't just as present as He'd always been.

But I still struggled with forgiving my friend and my ex and finding peace about these relationships.

A few days later, I was injured at my lifeguarding job. Since it happened while I was on the clock, I was asked to visit a doctor for legal reasons before I could return to work.

The doctor told me I had a severe heel strain. He said that I wouldn't be able to work and that I should limit the amount of walking I did for at least a week. The doctor also encouraged me to take painkillers. He told me that if I wanted a quick recovery, this would be the only way to speed it up. But I knew I wanted to rely totally on Christian Science for healing.

Over the next few days, my parents and I prayed, and my mom shared a passage from *Science and Health* that stood out to me: "Constant toil, deprivations, exposures, and all untoward conditions, *if without sin*, can be experienced without suffering. Whatever it is your duty to do, you can do without harm to yourself. If you sprain the muscles or wound the flesh, your remedy is at hand." Later on the page it continues, "Any supposed information, coming from the body or from inert matter as if either were intelligent, is an illusion of mortal mind,—one of its dreams. Realize that the evidence of the senses is not to be accepted in the case of sickness, any more than it is in the case of sin" (pp. 385–386).

This helped me understand that pain or any other discomfort doesn't come from God. It's just a mistaken way of thinking about things. And since I am the perfect

and spiritual creation of God, divine Love, I can never be separate from God, so I can never be hurt.

When Wednesday night church came around the next week, the readings were about forgiveness. How perfect! Each of the testimonies shared was relevant to what I'd been through in my own relationships. That night, I felt so calm about everything. I felt I could wholeheartedly forgive my friend and my ex-boyfriend. I really understood that my friend, ex, and I are all children of God—the offspring of Love—with no emotional or physical injuries attached.

The next day, at my follow-up appointment with the doctor, I was cleared to go back to work. This happened in a much shorter time frame than the doctor had predicted. When the doctor asked if I had taken medication, I said no. The doctor seemed surprised because of how quickly I'd recovered.

I was able to return to all my normal activities, including my work, right away.

I am very grateful to have reconnected with Christian Science and to see how my study and practice of Christian Science leads to healing.

HEALINGS

Persistent prayer reveals that sight is spiritual

Felix Droß

Originally published in German

Some time ago, a friend and I were at a soccer field to watch a game with our village team. During the game, I received a WhatsApp message from an acquaintance asking for prayer.

I stepped aside to respond and stopped paying attention to what was going on in the game. I wrote that error, the

opposite of Truth, God, would torpedo us, but we should stick to the truth.

Just as I sent the message, the soccer ball hit me with full force in my right eye. I was momentarily stunned but affirmed that in God's orderly, harmonious universe—the kingdom of heaven all around us—there are no accidents. This helped me focus on the spiritual truth of the situation and assure the players as well as some nearby spectators that all was well.

While they turned their attention back to the game, I became quiet and stayed close in thought to what is true. Although my eye was watering and I was having trouble seeing out of it, I didn't fixate on that and instead persisted in prayer. All at once I realized my statement that error would torpedo us with its false beliefs was wrong. Error is a lie. A lie isn't something; it's a negation. It's nothing and can neither want nor do something, so it can neither torpedo me nor want to do so. With that, I closed the door of my consciousness to the lie, forbidding it entrance. I also affirmed that no suffering can come of a loving willingness to help someone, as I had been doing.

On my way home, I expanded my prayers to recognize that true sight is spiritual, bestowed by God, who is Spirit itself. This spiritual sense is therefore untouched and uncircumscribed by matter or physicality.

When I arrived home, I was happy to have peace and quiet to continue immersing myself in prayer. Whenever fearful thoughts suggested that my eye was seriously injured, I persisted with my spiritual convictions. When I tried to read something in the Christian Science textbook, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy, and it wasn't possible, I reminded myself that sight is a spiritual quality of God, so I couldn't be separated from it. I was ready to let Spirit, Truth, show me that I was free. Assured that it would, I fell asleep.

The next morning I was worried to open my eyes at first, concerned that perhaps no healing had taken place. But I prayed to know and trust Truth and realized that anything unlike Truth has no power. Trustingly I opened my eyes. I was able to see clearly! The most wonderful thing about this healing was the feeling of

an all-embracing love that came over me during the morning.

I thank God for this healing, and I give Him the glory.

Felix Droß

Kirchhain, Germany

Financial mix-up resolved

Joyce Dygert

Years ago, my former financial advisor suggested some changes I should make to my investments. Because he was recently retired, he explained how I could make these changes myself by phone. I wasn't comfortable doing this because I didn't understand it, but I went ahead.

At tax time, I discovered I'd done something incorrectly, resulting in an error that would require me to pay much higher taxes. My tax preparer and my new financial advisor outlined various steps I could take, but it was hard to know which was the best approach.

I talked with a friend who is an experienced Christian Scientist. I was fearful, confused, and didn't know what to do. One of the first things my friend said was that I should clear my mind of all the garbage. I knew this meant that I should clear my thinking of fear and confusion and replace those thoughts with spiritual facts.

Mary Baker Eddy writes in *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*: "To divest thought of false trusts and material evidences in order that the spiritual facts of being may appear,—this is the great attainment by means of which we shall sweep away the false and give place to the true" (p. 428).

I wrote down what I knew to be spiritually true. This calmed me right away. Here are some examples of the spiritual facts I affirmed: God is always expressing

Himself to all His children as the one, infinite Mind, so He is guiding everyone in this situation. I can trust His omnipotent care, so no human opinions or suggestions can be intimidating. The situation is not in man's hands but under God's loving control, and nothing is impossible to God, so I can expect healing.

As I prayed with these truths, knowing that the one Mind was governing everyone involved, I felt such peace. I knew there had been no intent to do wrong. Everyone was loving and helpful. I could see how they were expressing Mind. My new advisor worked very hard on my behalf, but could not promise me anything, as it appeared that too much time had gone by to correct the situation. I felt such peace, though, that I knew I would still be OK even if I didn't get this money back. God certainly had not stopped, and would not stop, loving me for a moment.

I don't know how much time went by before I got a call from the financial institution. They recognized that the mix-up had resulted from an honest mistake and were restoring my investments as though the mistake had never happened. The healing of this situation was so complete that not only did I not lose money but I was given a \$50 check to reimburse any expenses incurred in resolving the issue. I am very grateful for this healing.

Joyce Dygert

Monrovia, California, US

Difficulty overcome during birth

Catherine de Jocas

One afternoon, during the early stages of my second pregnancy, I sat down to pray for the child. The circumstances leading up to the delivery of our first child had been challenging (see "A harmonious birth," *The Christian Science Journal*, September 2024), and I wanted to feel secure during this second pregnancy.

When I reached out to God and asked Him what I needed to know during this precious time, I heard the word *viable*. To me, this meant that this child reflected the life, energy, robustness, and health that come directly from and are sustained by God, independent of me. I knew that God, divine Life, was the actual life of this child, and this was the rock that I planted my feet on during the months that followed.

When the time came for delivery, my Christian Science teacher was the practitioner on the case, and my husband kept him apprised of the progress of the birth. Initially, things went smoothly. But after the baby's head passed through the birth canal, his body became stuck. By this time, I was exhausted and seemed to have nothing left to push with. I also found it hard to keep my composure in the midst of this situation.

My husband called the practitioner. Suddenly I heard a loud, commanding voice in my thought saying, "Daniel and the lions' den!" I had no idea how this connected to my present predicament, but I immediately felt a strength that was beyond my own. I gave one huge push, and the child emerged.

The attending physician, who was nearing retirement, told me that the placenta was the largest that he had ever witnessed in all his years of practice. He was truly astonished. Our son weighed almost ten pounds and had clearly been abundantly supplied all those months. This was proof to me that God indeed ensures the viability of His creation.

When we were leaving the hospital, the discharging physician noticed the circumstances of our son's birth according to the chart. He told us that we were very fortunate because when babies get stuck in the manner that our son had been, the physician will often need to take drastic measures to allow passage to resume. I knew, however, to the depth of my being, that this resolution had been brought about by God. As Mary Baker Eddy, the Discoverer and Founder of Christian Science, writes, ". . . the impetus comes from above—it is moral, spiritual, divine" (*The First Church of Christ, Scientist, and Miscellany*, p. 252).

As grateful as I was for both the prayers of the practitioner and the birth of a healthy son, the idea

of “Daniel and the lions’ den!” niggled at me. I knew that all Bible stories relate to God’s very present help in trouble, but I could not understand how this particular Bible story connected with our son’s birth. In a way, I felt cheated of a full healing—I got the blessing without the accompanying understanding. As it turned out, I would have to be patient and grow before the understanding became clear.

Some time after this, the story of Daniel in the lions’ den appeared in the weekly Bible Lesson from the *Christian Science Quarterly*, which I study daily. The subject for that week was “God,” and included corresponding spiritual truths from the Christian Science textbook, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mrs. Eddy, that shed light on how this healing had occurred.

The opening verse of the Responsive Reading in that Lesson read, “In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a thing was revealed unto Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar; and the thing was true, but the time appointed was long” (Daniel 10:1). To me, this was a promise that I could never be deprived of whatever understanding I needed, no matter how long it took to become apparent. God would not disappoint me; He would satisfy my heart.

This citation in that Lesson, along with others from *Science and Health*, also spoke to me: “Understanding the control which Love held over all, Daniel felt safe in the lions’ den. . . . All of God’s creatures, moving in the harmony of Science, are harmless, useful, indestructible” (p. 514). It helped me see that our son had never been in peril or “stuck” because God’s government precludes inertia, inaction, or obstruction; he had always been safe and moving forward. Nor could he have harmed me under any circumstances.

I am grateful for the safe arrival of our son and the effectiveness of Christian Science treatment. But I am equally grateful for the rebirth and spiritual growth that continued for me long after the healing had taken place. Our family was blessed by this experience.

Catherine de Jocas

Mississauga, Ontario, Canada

Healing of a burn

Nilda Maria Alves

Originally published in Portuguese

A number of years ago, I was introduced to Christian Science by my youngest brother. What struck me about the teachings of this Science was that it reveals our relationship to God—our oneness with God. He is always present, never far away. God is Spirit and is All-in-all.

I felt a desire to attend the services in a Christian Science branch church in my city, and I really enjoyed studying Christian Science literature in the Reading Room of this church. I began to feel more confident about putting what I was learning into practice. And soon I had an opportunity to prove that God keeps us safe, that He really takes care of us.

One afternoon, I was making a hot drink, but I was careless and spilled the boiling water over my hand. The first moment was one of pain and fear. But ideas from that week’s Bible Lesson in the *Christian Science Quarterly* immediately came to mind. It was natural to feel the confidence to put into practice what I had just studied in the Bible Lesson. I remembered Jesus’ words “Fear not” (Luke 8:50), and felt my fear melt away. I became imbued with a calm trust that, as the image and likeness of God, Spirit, I could never be in pain.

In Christian Science I also learned that God is Truth, and from Truth can emanate only what is true about God’s creation, including all His children. I recognized, without doubt, that in Truth the only law in action is God’s law, and that this law enforces only the goodness and perfection of God’s entirely spiritual creation.

I was no longer impressed by the accident, and by relying on this perception of Truth, I felt calm enough

to continue with my chores. I did not look at my hand again. Only that night, when I went to bed, did I notice that there was no sign of a burn—no redness and no painful area. I was immensely grateful to God and felt renewed strength to continue learning and practicing the teachings of Christian Science.

Shortly thereafter, I took Christian Science Primary class instruction, and I carry in my heart the certainty that Christian Science is the path I want to follow for a harmonious life. Every day we have new opportunities to recognize God’s healing presence and go forward.

Nilda Maria Alves
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

BIBLE LENS

Truth

from the Golden Text

Genesis 18:25

Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

God is designated Israel’s judge throughout the Hebrew Bible. His judgment is perceived as not only condemnation for evildoers but also salvation for the righteous (see examples in Psalms 7:8, 11; 37:28; Isaiah 11:4; 33:22, citation 17).

Abram poses his question at the time of Sodom’s pending destruction. The city’s corruption is conspicuous, yet he pleads for God’s mercy—not to excuse wrongdoing but to honor a possible righteous minority (see vv. 23–33).

One commentator remarks that the Hebrew patriarch “forges a link between the *compassionate justice of God* . . .

and *God’s holiness*. . . . What is at issue is not simply *equity in human history* but *the character of God*.”

from Section 1

2 | Psalms 119:12, 27, 30

Blessed art thou, O Lord: teach me thy statutes. . . . Make me to understand the way of thy precepts: so shall I talk of thy wondrous works. . . . I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me.

Translation

*I praise you, LORD!
Teach me your laws.*

.
*Help me to understand
your teachings,
and I will think about
your marvelous deeds.*

.
*I am determined to be faithful
and to respect your laws.*

—Contemporary English Version

4 | Jeremiah 5:3

O Lord, are not thine eyes upon the truth?

Hebrew Scripture includes dozens of mentions of God’s “eyes” to describe His omniscience, often to illustrate His benevolent oversight of creation (see examples in II Chronicles 16:9; Psalms 34:15). Many modern versions interpret this verse to mean that God looks or searches for faithfulness and truth.

from Section 2

5 | Psalms 9:1, 4

I will praise thee, O Lord, with my whole heart; I will shew forth all thy marvellous works. . . . For thou hast maintained my right and my cause; thou satest in the throne judging right.

Translation

*I will give you thanks, O LORD, with all my heart.
I will tell about all the miracles you have done.*

.

*You have defended my just cause:
You sat down on your throne as a fair judge.*

—GOD'S WORD[®] Translation

8 | Numbers 27:2–7

[The daughters of Zelophehad] stood before Moses, and before Eleazar the priest, and before the princes and all the congregation, by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, saying, Our father died in the wilderness, and he was not in the company of them that gathered themselves together against the Lord in the company of Korah; . . . Why should the name of our father be done away from among his family, because he hath no son? Give unto us therefore a possession among the brethren of our father. And Moses brought their cause before the Lord. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, The daughters of Zelophehad speak right: thou shalt surely give them a possession of an inheritance among their father's brethren; and thou shalt cause the inheritance of their father to pass unto them.

Moses' divinely directed and precedent-setting decision in favor of Zelophehad's five daughters occurs during the distribution of land in Canaan (see 26:52–56). The sisters later appear before a priest and Moses' successor, Joshua, to remind them of the commandment that the women receive inheritance status with the male heirs of the family (see Joshua 17:1–6). This dispensation, one of the first recorded incidents involving the new generation of Israelites, also guarantees that their father's name will be preserved.

Although the five daughters face a restriction to marry within their tribe (a requirement intended to preserve the tribe's land; see Numbers, chap. 36), their new right to inherit represents a historic step forward for women in ancient Israel.

from Section 3

10 | Psalms 103:6, 7

The Lord executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed. He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel.

Translation

*The LORD gives righteousness
and justice to all who are treated unfairly.
He revealed his character to Moses
and his deeds to the people of Israel.*

—New Living Translation

12 | Luke 13:11–17

There was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself. And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. And he laid his hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day. The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day? And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.

Christ Jesus heals on the Sabbath several times. In addition to this instance, he cures a man whose hand is withered, an invalid, and a blind man (see Matthew 12:10–13; John 5:1–17; 9:1–7, 14). Each time, he is met with objections from Pharisees and others who cite the Fourth Commandment (see Exodus 20:8–11). But the Master shifts the focus from a rigid interpretation of religious codes to obedience to God’s law, which includes compassion and healing.

In calling the synagogue ruler a hypocrite, Jesus refers to the dissembling and artifice typical of a stage actor (the most common sense of the Greek word *hypokritēs*).

from Section 4

15 | Proverbs 14:22

Do they not err that devise evil? but mercy and truth shall be to them that devise good.

Translation

*Do not those who plot evil go astray?
But those who plan what is good find love and
faithfulness.*

—NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®

17 | Isaiah 33:10, 13, 15, 16, 22

Now will I rise, saith the Lord; now will I be exalted; . . . Hear, ye that are far off, what I have done; and, ye that are near, acknowledge my might. . . . He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; he shall dwell on high: . . . For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; he will save us.

Translation

*. . . the LORD says,
“Now I will do something
and be greatly praised.*

*.
Everyone, both far and near,
come look at what I have done.
See my mighty power!”*

*.
. . . there will be rewards
for those who live right
and tell the truth,
for those who refuse
to take money by force
or accept bribes,
for all who hate murder
and violent crimes.*

*They will live in a fortress
high on a rocky cliff,*

*.
The LORD is our judge
and our ruler;
the LORD is our king
and will keep us safe.*

—Contemporary English Version

Šāma‘, the Hebrew verb usually rendered *hear* or *hearken*, also signifies obey. God’s charge to hear demands not only attention but also obedience. And the terms *far off* and *near* represent the entire world, Gentile and Jewish nations alike.

Acting as judges and lawgivers as well as monarchs, kings in the ancient Near East generally controlled all functions of the government (what is frequently divided today into the judicial, legislative, and executive branches). To Jews, Yahweh’s rule—expressed in His covenant with Israel—is all-encompassing.

18 | Isaiah 9:6, 7

Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: . . . Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne

of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

Translation

A child will be born to us.

A son will be given to us.

He will rule over us. . . .

There will be no limit to how great his authority is.

The peace he brings will never end.

He will rule on David's throne

and over his kingdom.

He will make the kingdom strong and secure.

His rule will be based on what is fair and right.

It will last forever.

The LORD's great love will make sure that happens.

He rules over all.

—New International Reader's Version™

Isaiah's momentous announcement offers assurance to an oppressed people (recently conquered by Assyria). Salvation, however, is not to come from a military leader but in the birth of a child.

A scholar notes: "Isaiah saw a messianic figure . . . who had divine qualities and yet who would enter human history, thus ushering in an age of peace and righteousness. . . . This future ideal king will establish the kingdom the way it was meant to be, in justice and righteousness, a task that will not be realized through human means but will require an act of God."

The depiction of the government as "upon his shoulder," according to another source, overturns "the rod of the oppressor on the shoulders" (see v. 4).

from Section 5

19 | John 8:31, 32

Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

Translation

Jesus said to the Jews who believed in him, "You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teaching. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

—Common English Bible

John's Gospel celebrates truth, mentioning *true* or *truth* about forty times. In this saying, Jesus places a prerequisite on knowing the truth—maintaining an ongoing commitment to his teachings. This discipleship, a commentary explains, involves "constant obeying of the word of Jesus. We study it not simply for academic satisfaction or for intellectual appreciation, but in order to find out what God wishes us to do. . . . The truth which Jesus brought is designed for action."

20 | John 5:1, 5, 8, 9

There was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. . . . And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years. . . . Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked.

While this man's infirmity isn't identified, scholars compare his condition with that of the palsied man in Mark 2:3—an invalid who has friends to carry him. This individual apparently has no assistance and is singled out as having a long history of disability (having waited for healing for 38 years). With spiritual authority, the Master annuls both his helplessness and the duration of his case.

from Section 6

22 | II Thessalonians 3:1

Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you.

Translation

Finally, brothers and sisters, pray for us so that the Lord's message will spread quickly and be honored, just like it happened with you.

—Common English Bible

Praying for one another was an early Christian practice (see additional examples in Colossians 1:9; Hebrews 13:18). In this appeal, the “free course” of God’s Word recalls the promise of Psalms 147:15: “His word runneth very swiftly.” And “as it is with you” is viewed as a reference to readers’ reception of the gospel (see I Thessalonians 1:5, 6; 2:13, 14) as well as their continuing devotion to it.

23 | II Corinthians 13:8

For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.

Translation

For we cannot oppose the truth, but must always stand for the truth.

—New Living Translation

24 | Acts 5:12, 16–21, 25, 27, 34, 35, 38–40

By the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; . . . There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one. Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation, and laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison. But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said, Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life. And when they heard that, they entered into the temple early in the morning, and taught. But the high priest came, and they that were with him, and called the council together, and all the senate of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought. . . . Then came one and told them, saying, Behold,

the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple, and teaching the people. . . . And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: . . . Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space; and said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men. . . . And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God. And to him they agreed.

Gamaliel was a respected member of the Sanhedrin (the Jewish high council) and is traditionally identified as grandson of the distinguished Hebrew elder Hillel. In Acts 22:3 he is named as Paul’s teacher in Jerusalem. Sources characterize Gamaliel as his time’s greatest authority on Hebrew law and as a judge known for consistently acting in the interest of the common good.

In the case of Peter and his fellow apostles, Gamaliel—a Pharisee—challenges the aggressive acts of the Sadducees. (Although these two groups sometimes united in opposing Jesus’ instruction and works, they often disagreed about doctrinal principles.) Gamaliel’s well-reasoned argument and moderating influence undoubtedly save the apostles’ lives.

A commentary suggests: “The primary meaning of the apostles’ heavenly deliverance from prison is clear: In spite of public appearances to the contrary, God remains in firm control. . . . No one or no thing can intrude upon the forward movement of the gospel according to God’s plan of salvation.” (Two other accounts of divine release from prison are recorded in 12:1–11 and 16:16–40.)

25 | Galatians 5:7, 13

Who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? . . . For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty.

Translation

Who stopped you from following the true way? . . . My brothers and sisters, God called you to be free. . .

—New Century Version®

Read a related article, “Modern daughters of Zelophehad” by Barbara Blech Dunbar, at cssentinel.com/modern-daughters

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Love

from the Responsive Reading

I John 4:6–8, 12, 13, 17–21

We are of God: . . . Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. . . . If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. . . . Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: . . . We love him, because he first loved us. If a

man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.

Long-standing Hebrew law urged love of God and one's neighbor (see Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18). First John melds these into an interdependent whole: Love for God is expressed in love of others; love of others springs from God's love for us.

A commentary explains: "[The author] is not saying that we should practice human love in order to grow into divine love. . . . He is not interested in teaching us about stages of loving God, but about giving us tests by which we can see if we really love God in the first place."

Romans 13:8–10

Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

Paul has just charged believers to honor payments due for Roman tributes and taxes (see vv. 6, 7). But unlike these and most other debts, Paul notes, love calls for continuing disbursement and is never paid off.

Plērōma, the Greek word translated *fulfilling*, is usually rendered *fulness* in Scripture—for example, in this encouragement to the Ephesians: "to know the love of Christ, . . . that ye might be filled with all the fulness [*plērōma*] of God" (Ephesians 3:19). By its very nature, love satisfies every requirement of the Mosaic law, including the Ten Commandments.

According to some sources, the apostle's change in wording from the Jewish "Love thy neighbour" (Leviticus 19:18) to "love one another" expands the meaning beyond friends and acquaintances.

from Section 1

2 | Deuteronomy 10:12, 13

What doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of the Lord, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?

Translation

... what does the LORD your God require from you, but to fear [and worship] the LORD your God [with awe-filled reverence and profound respect], to walk [that is, to live each and every day] in all His ways and to love Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul [your choices, your thoughts, your whole being], and to keep the commandments of the LORD and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good?

—Amplified[®] Bible (AMP)

5 | Romans 5:5

The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

Translation

... we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.

—New Living Translation

Ekkheō, the Greek term rendered *shed abroad*, means to pour out as from an overflowing fountain. One scholar says: "God is not a big brother dispensing miserly increments of goodwill to his minions. God is a compassionate Father who literally *pours out* his love within us." (*Ekkheō* appears again to indicate the liberal descent of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:18, 33; 10:45.)

6 | Hebrews 10:24

Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.

Translation

. . . let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. . . .

—NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®

from Section 2

8 | Psalms 121:8

The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.

Translation

*The LORD will watch over your life no matter where you go,
both now and forever.*

—New International Reader's Version™

9 | II Kings 6:8–17

The king of Syria warred against Israel, and took counsel with his servants, saying, In such and such a place shall be my camp. And the man of God sent unto the king of Israel, saying, Beware that thou pass not such a place; for thither the Syrians are come down. And the king of Israel sent to the place which the man of God told him and warned him of, and saved himself there, not once nor twice. Therefore the heart of the king of Syria was sore troubled for this thing; and he called his servants, and said unto them, Will ye not shew me which of us is for the king of Israel? And one of his servants said, None, my lord, O king: but Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber. And he said, Go and spy where he is, that I may send and fetch him. And it was told him, saying, Behold, he is in Dothan. Therefore sent he thither horses, and chariots, and a great host: and they came

by night, and compassed the city about. And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do? And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.

In the mid-ninth century BC, an Aramean kingdom known as Syria (distinct from the contemporary nation of that name) was in continual conflict with Israel. Here its king, Benhadad, outlines a strategy to ambush the Israelites. When Elisha predicts Syrian military movements, Benhadad plans an attack on Dothan, where the prophet is living.

The site of Joseph's betrayal by his brothers hundreds of years earlier, Dothan was about 11 miles (18 km) north of the Israelite royal residence in Samaria. The Syrian horses and chariots that "compassed the city about" are no match for the "horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha"—a phenomenon that had also occurred at Elijah's passing from earth (see 2:11).

9 | II Kings 6:18–23

When [the Syrian army] came down to him, Elisha prayed unto the Lord, and said, Smite this people, I pray thee, with blindness. And he smote them with blindness according to the word of Elisha. And Elisha said unto them, This is not the way, neither is this the city: follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom ye seek. But he led them to Samaria. And it came to pass, when they were come into Samaria, that Elisha said, Lord, open the eyes of these men, that they may see. And the Lord opened their eyes, and they saw; and, behold, they were in the midst of Samaria. And the king of Israel said unto Elisha, when he saw them, My father, shall I smite them? shall I smite them? And he answered, Thou shalt not smite them: wouldest thou smite those whom thou hast taken captive with thy sword and with thy bow? set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink, and go to their master. And he prepared great provision for them: and when they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away, and they went to

their master. So the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel.

Themes of sight and blindness characterize this story. First, Elisha “sees” the location of the enemy campsite. Next, his servant’s eyes are opened to divine might by the prophet’s prayer. Last, through Elisha’s spiritual sight, the Syrian army is overcome by blindness, led to the stronghold of King Jehoram of Israel, and again given sight.

With the enemy army delivered to him, Jehoram considers killing them. Yet he defers to Elisha’s authority, respectfully calling him “my father.” Elisha’s response is seen in two ways—as either a reminder that prisoners of war were to be treated humanely or an assertion that soldiers not taken captive in battle should be shown kindness. Whatever the viewpoint, Elisha makes clear that it was God’s supremacy, not military force, that saved Dothan—and that divine power could be honored only by an act of mercy.

from Section 3

12 | Luke 9:38–43

A man of the company cried out, saying, Master, I beseech thee, look upon my son: for he is mine only child. And, lo, a spirit taketh him, and he suddenly crieth out; and it teareth him that he foameth again, and bruising him hardly departeth from him. And I besought thy disciples to cast him out; and they could not. And Jesus answering said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, and suffer you? Bring thy son hither. And as he was yet a-coming, the devil threw him down, and tare him. And Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child, and delivered him again to his father. And they were all amazed at the mighty power of God.

Jesus often laments over or censures “this generation”—not individuals born at a particular time but all those who reject God’s Son (see examples in Luke 11:29–32; 17:24, 25; 21:32). In this narrative, the Master’s sharp rebuke echoes Moses’ condemnation of the people for their infidelity to God: “They are a perverse and crooked generation” (Deuteronomy

32:5). The Savior underscores his reproof by decisively denouncing the evil spirit and curing the boy.

from Section 4

13 | Zephaniah 3:17

The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.

Translation

*“The LORD your God
wins victory after victory
and is always with you.
He celebrates and sings
because of you,
and he will refresh your life
with his love.”*

—Contemporary English Version

14 | Matthew 9:10–13

It came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners? But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Scribes who had seen the Savior’s recent healing of a palsied man had been told, “The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins” (v. 6). But the Pharisees regarded scriptural counsel such as Psalms 1:1 as banning contact with sinners. Now they object to Jesus’ dining with these transgressors—an action that implies strong fellowship with them. Jesus responds with a well-known proverb (that those who are well have no need of doctors) and reaffirms his mission of

salvation from sin. “To Jesus,” observes a scholar, “fear of pollution weighed not at all in the scale of mercy. . . .”

With the words “Go ye and learn” (a phrase Pharisees employed), Jesus addresses them as students ignorant of their own texts instead of as the learned academics they pride themselves on being. Jesus’ admonition refers them to the book of Hosea: “I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings” (6:6; see also Matthew 12:7). Mercy and compassion, not religious rites, are the real essence of the law—and the heart of Jesus’ teachings.

15 | Luke 19:1–10

Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. And, behold, there was a man named Zacchæus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchæus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner. And Zacchæus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Unique to Luke’s Gospel, this story unfolds as Jesus makes his final journey from Galilee to Jerusalem. Earlier on this trip, the Master cured ten lepers (see 17:11–19). His meeting with Zacchæus redeems another kind of outcast—a Jew who is hated because of his occupation as a tax collector for Rome. “To seek and to save that which was lost” recalls Ezekiel 34:16: “I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away.”

Jesus has previously admonished the wealthy—in his warning “Woe unto you that are rich!”; in the parable

of the rich man; in the account of another affluent man and the beggar Lazarus; and in his interchange with a prosperous ruler (see 6:24; 12:16–21; 16:19–31; 18:18–25). Here he witnesses a wealthy man’s reformation.

from Section 5

16 | Romans 8:38, 39

I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Translation

I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God’s love which Christ Jesus our Lord shows us. We can’t be separated by death or life, by angels or rulers, by anything in the present or anything in the future, by forces or powers in the world above or in the world below, or by anything else in creation.

—GOD’S WORD[®] Translation

17 | Ephesians 2:4–6

God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

Translation

God loves us deeply. He is full of mercy. So he gave us new life because of what Christ has done. He gave us life even when we were dead in sin. God’s grace has saved you. God raised us up with Christ. He has seated us with him in his heavenly kingdom. That’s because we belong to Christ Jesus.

—New International Reader’s Version[™]

God's bountiful mercy is celebrated throughout the Hebrew Bible as well (see, for instance, Exodus 34:6; Psalms 103:8; Jonah 4:2). A commentator reflects, "There is an inexhaustible treasury of . . . mercy in the loving heart of God."

The triple usage of *together* highlights this author's emphasis on believers' unity in Christ. And "raised us up," another source remarks, points to resurrection "from the spiritual 'death' brought about by sin into a new quality of life shared with Christ. It describes a spiritual transformation available to the Christian *now* in this life."

18 | II Corinthians 13:11

Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.

Translation

. . . *Be made complete [be what you should be], be comforted, be like-minded, live in peace [enjoy the spiritual well-being experienced by believers who walk closely with God]; and the God of love and peace [the source of lovingkindness] will be with you.*

—Amplified[®] Bible (AMP)

from Section 6

19 | Philippians 1:2, 9–11

Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord 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

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. . . . And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you to determine what really matters, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

—New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition

Dokimazō, the Greek verb rendered *approve* here, means to confirm the fitness of something or someone by examination. Christians are to grow in spiritual understanding in order to discern what is "excellent"—godly thinking and living in contrast to false doctrine and worldly influences.

Sincere is translated from the adjective *eilikrinēs*, meaning pure. Some scholars compare this purity to the spotlessness of a clean garment examined in the sunlight.

"The day of Christ" refers to the return of the Savior to earth—an event thought to be imminent by many early Christians.

Read a related editorial, "The allness of Love" by Helen Wood Bauman, at cssentinel.com/allness-Love

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Letters & Conversations

Diane Collins, Kim Hixson, Richard Arlen, Terry Suarez

> Lisa Rennie Sytsma, "Following the star," Sentinel, December 16, 2024

This editorial is tremendous, hopeful, and so needed right now. The last paragraph is very accessible to all people. I was able to share it with a multid denominational group of foundations working at the intersection of faith and philanthropy and feeling engulfed in darkness right now. They loved it!

Diane Collins, *Wayne, Pennsylvania, US*

> Bobby Lewis, "Christ's healing present," Sentinel, December 2, 2024

This poem is so beautiful. Thank you.

Kim Hixson, *Ridgefield, Washington, US*

> Tyler Flavin, "Severe back pain healed," Sentinel, December 2, 2024

Thank you to Tyler. His healing was very helpful.

Richard Arlen, *Highland Beach, Florida, US*

> Kit Cornell Kurtz, “It has to be Love,” Sentinel, October 31, 2024

This poem has become an inspiration for my healing treatments, as it includes all situations. Thank you.

Terry Suarez, Palm Harbor, Florida, US

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