



The Lord is my strength
and song, and is become
my salvation.

—Psalms 118:14



Christian Science Sentinel
Bible Lens

**God the
Preserver
of Man**

**December 9–15,
2019**

God the Preserver of Man

from the Responsive Reading

Psalms 118:5

I called upon the Lord in distress: the Lord answered me, and set me in a large place.

Distress is translated from the Hebrew word *mēšar*, signifying not only pain or trouble but also a tight or narrow space. Another psalm similarly describes divine deliverance from an enemy: “Thou hast set my feet in a large room” (31:8).

“A broad place,” according to one source, “is a characteristic way of describing God’s gift of salvation.”

Psalms 91:5

Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day.

“One who abides under the shadow of the Almighty need not fear sudden surprises by night or open attacks by day,” writes a scholar. “Day and night are both alike to Him in whom we dwell.”

from Section 2

6 | Ezekiel 18:1–3

The word of the Lord came unto me again, saying, What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge? As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel.

One of the roles of a prophet in Bible times was to correct false views of God’s nature.

The “sour grapes” proverb addressed a commonly held Jewish belief that God punished them for wrongs committed by those who had gone before them. The prophet Jeremiah uses the same saying to point out this error of belief (see Jeremiah 31:29, 30).

8 | Psalms 16:11

Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

Like Psalm 23, this psalm is known as a psalm of trust. Verse 11—cited by Peter on the Day of Pentecost (see Acts 2:28)—conveys the joy of living in God’s presence. One researcher sees in this verse a link with verse 6 of Psalm 23 (Responsive Reading), “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.”

from Section 3

10 | Numbers 22:21, 23

Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab.... And the ass saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and the ass turned aside out of the way, and went into the field: and Balaam smote the ass, to turn her into the way.

Balaam was a non-Hebrew seer who heard and followed the directions of the Hebrew deity, Yahweh—at least for a time. When the Israelites were camped in Moab just prior to entering the Promised Land, Moabite king Balak sent messengers charg-

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

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

ing Balaam to curse them. After receiving divine direction, Balaam refuses (see 22:9–13, 23:16–20).

The account of the talking donkey takes place in the middle of repeated efforts by Balak to bring Balaam to his aid. The seer is on his way to meet Balak in person when Yahweh sends an angel to stop him—yet only the donkey sees the angel at first. Viewed by some as a humorous interlude, the story nevertheless makes clear that God can communicate even when human hearts seem closed to Him.

Balaam apparently later suggests to Balak a way to overcome the Israelites (see 31:16). In the New Testament, he is remembered for his actions against the people of God (see II Peter 2:15; Jude 1:11; Revelation 2:14).

from Section 5

17 | Psalms 79:11

According to the greatness of thy power preserve thou those that are appointed to die.

“Those that are appointed to die”—a phrase echoed in Psalms 102:20—is believed to be a reference to Hebrew exiles in Babylon. Their captivity may have felt like a death sentence, and any attempt to return home would have been penalized with death.

21 | John 10:10

I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

That Jesus came to impart life is a theme integral to the Gospel of John, mentioned more than in any other New Testament

book (some three dozen times). This spiritual sense of life doesn’t merely meet the bare human necessities, but reveals eternal existence.

The word *more* is an early translator’s addition to the original text. A commentator suggests, “It is not that a greater is compared with a less abundance, but that the abundance of life which results through Christ’s coming is contrasted with the spiritual wants and death which He came to remove.”

from Section 6

23 | Psalms 121:8

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

“Thy going out and thy coming in” was a Hebrew phrase describing the whole of life. One scholar interprets this sweeping assurance, “The Lord shall preserve thy going out, and thy coming in.... In transacting all the business of life, in going in and out about it; in all ways, works, and conversation; in journeying and travelling; in all affairs, civil and religious; and not only preserve, but prosper in all.”

Resources quoted in this issue

RR: Attridge, Harold W., ed. *The HarperCollins Study Bible*. Rev. ed. New York: HarperCollins, 2006; Eiselen, Frederick Carl., Edwin Lewis, and David G. Downey, eds. *The Abingdon Bible Commentary*. New York: Abingdon Press, 1929.

Cit. 8: Barker, Kenneth, et al., eds. *The NIV Study Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995.

Cit. 21: Ellicott, Charles John, ed. *A Bible Commentary for English Readers by Various Writers*. London: Cassell, 1897–1905. Also available at studylight.org/commentaries.

Cit. 23: Gill, John. *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*. London, 1746–63. Also available at biblehub.com/commentaries.

When you're afraid



Reprinted from *The Christian Science Monitor*
From the August 2, 1993, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*

Probably everybody has been afraid sometime. When I'm scared, I pray. I know that if I turn to God, He will help me. How? Sometimes I just stop feeling scared and feel calm and peaceful instead. Sometimes I get an idea about what to do. Sometimes a scary situation just dissolves—people who were yelling and looked as though they might start fighting, suddenly cool off.

To me, the best explanation of how God protects us when we are afraid is in Psalm 91 in the Bible. This particular psalm talks about dangers that seem to be all around us, but it doesn't stop there—it promises us God's help. In one place it says, "There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways" (verses 10, 11).

That's a pretty big promise. Angels are ideas from God, messages from Him to us. God knows us as His children, so it's natural for Him to send us ideas that will help us and keep us safe. He's just being a good Father!

The first thing we need to do when we're scared is to pray to hear His angel messages. His thoughts, or angels, are always coming to us, but sometimes fear seems to keep us from listening to them. Prayer is a great way to listen because you can pray no matter where you are or what is going on around you. When you're going through the halls at school, having lunch, or sitting in class, you can pray to feel God's presence.

Prayer isn't a big speech, and it doesn't have to take a lot of time. My shortest prayer has been "Help!" Others have been longer. The main thing is to turn to God with your whole heart and mind and ask Him to help you. You don't even have to

speak aloud. As Mary Baker Eddy writes in *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, "Thoughts unspoken are not unknown to the divine Mind" (p. 1).

The divine Mind is God. God isn't a big old bearded man looking down from a cloud. Instead, He is Spirit and He is everywhere. This means there isn't any place where His help can't reach you. Christ Jesus, who taught us that we are God's spiritual children, trusted God. And God never let him down.

Since God is Mind, He is totally intelligent. That means that the angels He sends to you aren't going to tell you to do something stupid. In fact, that same psalm says of God's angels: "They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone" (verse 12). This shows just how deep God's love for us is, and how He takes care of every single detail if we let Him.

If you have to walk down a dark alley on the way home, you can pray to feel that God is there with you—because He is. If you need to go past some tough kids, you aren't alone, because God is with you. No matter why you feel scared or alone, God loves you and He won't leave you. And since He is everywhere, you can't leave Him. Right this minute He has messages of love that are meant just for you. He sends them to protect you.

To read the entire article, which has been shortened to fit this page, go to jsh.christianscience.com/when-you'-re-afraid.