



Thou art my lamp,  
O Lord: and the Lord  
will lighten my darkness.

—II Samuel 22:29



Christian Science Sentinel  
**Bible Lens**

**God the  
Preserver  
of Man**

**June 8–14, 2020**

# God the Preserver of Man

## from Section 1

### 2 | Nehemiah 9:6, 7

*Thou, even thou, art Lord alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein.... Thou art the Lord the God, who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham.*

After the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem, the Hebrew people gather to give thanks to Yahweh. The long prayer in chapter nine follows days of fasting, confession, and reading from the Scriptures. It opens with a description of creation, seen by some as a direct reference to Genesis 1.

A comprehensive summary of God's guidance through many centuries makes up the body of the prayer, which concludes with a recommitment to the covenant with God (see vv. 7–31, 38).

“Heaven of heavens” (also mentioned in Deuteronomy 10:14; I Kings 8:27; II Chronicles 2:6) is seen as either a belief in many levels of heaven or simply a superlative to describe God's dwelling.

Ur, the home city of Abraham (see Genesis 11:31), was located in Mesopotamia (in present-day Iraq). *Chaldees* is another term for Chaldeans, residents of a region in Babylonia. Worship of the Assyrian moon god Sin was centered there, and it is from there that God calls the Hebrew patriarch to Canaan to establish a new nation.

## from Section 4

### 16 | II Peter 1:1, 2

*Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord.*

Here the writer is speaking to Gentiles—not those considered “chosen,” but those who gained their faith through the inclusive teachings of Christ. *Like precious*, translated from the Greek word *isotimos*, means equal in honor. It was used to describe foreigners who were accorded the citizenship rights of natives.

According to one source, the term rendered *knowledge* in this verse (Greek, *epignōsis*) alludes to more than simply knowing about something—it portrays full discernment. In this case, he suggests, it could be called “the master-science of life.” He continues, “The other sciences may bring new skill, new knowledge, new abilities, but the master-science, the knowledge of Jesus Christ, alone brings the grace men need and the peace for which their hearts crave.”

### 17 | Acts 9:36–38

*Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did. And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died.... And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that*

# 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

*Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring him that he would not delay to come to them.*

Peter’s leadership, preaching, and healings are highlighted in the first half of the Acts of the Apostles. His first healing (with John) was of the lame beggar at the gate of the Temple in Jerusalem (see Acts 3:1–8). The healing of Tabitha—the last of Peter’s healings mentioned in Scripture—is the first recorded cure of such magnitude performed by one of Jesus’ disciples.

When raising Tabitha, Peter addresses her directly, speaking as Jesus had done when he raised the dead (see Mark 5:41; Luke 7:14; John 11:43). At other times, Peter identifies the healing power of the Christ, saying, “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk” (Acts 3:6) and “Jesus Christ maketh thee whole” (Acts 9:34).

## from Section 5

### 21 | Acts 27:1

*When it was determined that we should sail into Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners unto one named Julius, a centurion of Augustus’ band.*

At this time (circa AD 60) Paul has been kept in custody at Caesarea for over two years by Roman governors Felix and Festus. Now, exercising his rights as a Roman citizen and appealing his case to Caesar, he is being sent to Rome as a prisoner (see chaps. 21–26).

The route of this voyage is not direct. Having started late in the year, when seas were known to be dangerous, the travelers need to move north and west as quickly as possible. But stops along the way are also nec-

essary. At Myra, on the south coast of what is now Turkey, they join an Egyptian ship believed to have been carrying grain to Rome. This shift is significant—the ability of such a ship to maneuver in stormy seas is limited.

After Paul’s counsel not to continue after reaching Crete is ignored, a “tempestuous wind” (v. 14) blows them some five hundred miles to the island of Melita (present-day Malta). The ship and its cargo are lost, yet Paul’s angelic visitor has assured him, “God hath given thee all them that sail with thee” (v. 24). Every one of the 276 sailors (see v. 37) is saved.

### 21 | Acts 27:42, 43

*The soldiers’ counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out, and escape. But the centurion, willing to save Paul, kept them from their purpose.*

Roman soldiers faced execution if they failed to deliver their prisoners, so it’s understandable that these men fear the captives’ escape. Julius, however, has expressed remarkable generosity to Paul during the voyage, allowing him freedom to visit friends at Sidon and listening to his advice during the storm (see vv. 3, 31–36). He continues this respectful treatment, ensuring that everyone survives.

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#### Resources quoted in this issue

**Cit. 16:** Barclay, William. *The Daily Study Bible: The Letters of James and Peter*. Edinburgh: Saint Andrew, 1955. Revised and updated by Saint Andrew, 2001. Reprinted as *The New Daily Study Bible: The Letters of James and Peter*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001–04.



# Spiritual ruggedness

By Channing Walker

From the April 30, 1984, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*

**T**hink of Paul. The shipwrecks, imprisonments, and floggings he endured would have sent most men scurrying back to the safer territory of commonly accepted dogmas and not-so-radically-spiritual religious beliefs. But that early Christian said of those hardships, “None of these things move me” (Acts 20:24). To thrive in the midst of trials like Paul’s takes a deep understanding of God’s care, coupled with a special quality that might be called “spiritual ruggedness.”

A facet of the true Christlike nature of man as God has made him, spiritual strength is possible for each of us in the degree we vigorously claim it. As we realize that man is really the reflection of God, Life, who is the source of all spiritual qualities, each of us has what it takes to get to the top of any mountainous challenge.

Should you have only a casual acquaintance with the Bible, you’re probably familiar with some illustrations of the quality we’re talking about. Time and again an individual’s faith in God got him imprisoned or tossed into a den of lions or a burning fiery furnace. But these biblical characters didn’t *stay* in the prison or the den or the furnace. In each case, the same sturdy faith in God that apparently had provoked the trial also provided the deliverance, as well as further blessings. Inevitably the net effect of meeting a challenge to spiritual integrity is a gain in strength, not weakness. “Every trial of our faith in God makes us stronger,” Mary Baker Eddy writes (*Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, p. 410).

Spiritual ruggedness emerges from testing times. In climbing a mountain, we develop more of what it takes to go on climbing mountains. Like those biblical people,

we do gain in spiritual strength and ruggedness as we face tough challenges with an understanding of our real and indestructible relationship to God, divine Life, Spirit.

The more we mentally, prayerfully get a sighting on our relationship to God, divine Life, as His perfect expression, the more we can bring our living into line with spiritually based thinking. This kind of thinking doesn’t cower, doesn’t follow the crowd when the crowd denies God’s all-power and omnipresence. One who is spiritually rugged stands firm, even if it means standing alone with God.

Take the issue of health, for example. It sometimes requires spiritual ruggedness to stand for healing through prayer instead of following the commonly accepted route of medicine. That route has been made enormously popular. But the less traveled one of reliance on prayer to God has been mapped out by Christ Jesus and proved effective. Christian Science reaffirms the effectiveness of prayer, of vigorously acknowledging the presence and power of God, divine Life, and His care for His creation. Science does not advocate a wishy-washy bargaining to put half our faith in God, half in some human helping agency.

As we claim and then exercise our God-bestowed spiritual ruggedness, we will find in increasing degree that we’re able to tackle successfully challenges we had thought were too big for us. And we’ll find we have what it takes to triumph.

To read the entire article, which has been shortened to fit this page, go to [jsh.christianscience.com/spiritual-ruggedness](http://jsh.christianscience.com/spiritual-ruggedness).