



## BIBLE LENS

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

# Everlasting Punishment

April 26–May 2, 2021

## from the **Golden Text**

### Isaiah 51:11

*The redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away.*

The book of Isaiah repeatedly describes God's redeeming action. In a majority of cases, the Hebrew verb rendered *redeemed* is *gā'al*, a legal term for the redemption of someone from servitude or debt by a kinsman. Here, however, the term is *pādâ*, signifying to ransom, release, or rescue. A nearly identical verse in [Isaiah 35:10](#) has, "The ransomed of the Lord shall return."

## from the **Responsive Reading**

### Titus 2:11, 12

*The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.*

**soberly:** in a calm, reasonable way

### Titus 3:4–7

*After that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*

A commentator calls this passage “one of the clearest statements in all the Bible that the implementation of God’s saving purpose is wholly at the initiative of God.” He continues: “Good works are necessary, but as the fruit, not the root, of discipleship. Good works will be the inevitable expression (and proof) that the relationship is sound, not its basis.”

**regeneration:** spiritual or moral renewal

**justified:** shown to be right or just

## Hebrews 12:11–13

*No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.*

*Chastening* (Greek, *paideia*) encompasses the entire training and education of children. When used in regard to adults, it denotes whatever regulates character, bringing thought and action in line with moral purity and godliness.

References to healing the lame sometimes symbolize universal restoration and redemption in Scripture. This writer echoes [Isaiah 35:3](#), “Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees”—part of a stirring chapter about divine salvation for the faithful.

A contemporary interpretation of [verse 13](#) offers, “Mark out a straight, smooth path for your feet so that those who follow you, though weak and lame, will not fall and hurt themselves but become strong.”

**chastening:** correcting; purifying from errors or faults

**grievous:** very hard or painful

## from **Section 1**

### Translation

#### 2 | [I John 3:9](#)

*Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.*

...

*No one who is born of God [deliberately, knowingly, and habitually] practices sin, because God’s seed [His principle of life, the essence of His righteous character] remains [permanently] in him [who is born again—who is reborn from above—spiritually transformed, renewed, and set apart for His purpose]; and he [who is born again] cannot habitually [live a life characterized by] sin, because he is born of God and longs to please Him.*

—Amplified® Bible

### 3 | Deuteronomy 32:3, 4

*Ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.*

#### Translation

*... Give praise to our God!  
The rock: his acts are perfection!  
No doubt about it: all his ways are right!  
He's the faithful God, never deceiving;  
altogether righteous and true is he. ...  
Isn't he your father, your creator?  
Didn't he make you and establish you?*

—Common English Bible

The stony terrain of Bible lands yielded rich metaphors for God's steadfast care and protection, and several mentions of God as a rock appear in the Old Testament. Later in this chapter, Moses employs this image to distinguish between the gods of the heathen and the God of Israel: "Their rock is not as our Rock" (v. 31).

### 5 | Isaiah 55:3

*Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.*

#### Translation

*Open your ears, and come to me!  
Listen so that you may live!  
I will make an everlasting promise to you—  
the blessings I promised to David.*

—GOD'S WORD Translation

*Everlasting covenant* is a phrase that occurs 15 times in the Bible—from the account of the rainbow in the story of Noah to a New Testament reference to Jesus' sacrifice and resurrection (see [Genesis 9:16](#); [Hebrews 13:20](#)).

“The sure mercies of David” alludes to a covenant God made with David (see [II Samuel 7:4–16](#); [Psalms 89:3, 4](#)). With this prophecy, God extends His pledge to the whole Hebrew nation—and Paul later applies it to followers of Christ Jesus (see [Acts 13:34](#)).

A scriptural authority submits this wording: “. . . Jehovah will, without fail, fulfill for His people the promises of loving-kindness made to David.”

## from **Section 2**

### 6 | [I John 3:6](#)

*Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.*

#### Translation

*See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! . . . No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.*

—New International Version

**abideth:** stays; continues permanently

### 7 | [Jonah 1:1–3](#)

*The word of the Lord came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me. But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.*

Jonah would have heard rumors of Nineveh. For most of the seventh century BC , it was the capital city of Assyria, a country whose kings had conquered all of Israel and most of Judah and laid siege to Jerusalem. Located on the eastern bank of the Tigris River, Nineveh was one of the oldest cities of Mesopotamia. At the height of its prosperity it was considered the most powerful metropolis in the world, and it was notorious for immorality (see [Nahum 3:1–4](#), written about Nineveh).

An initial rejection of God’s call isn’t unique to Jonah. Elijah had a similar response (see [I Kings 19:1–18](#)), and both Moses and Jeremiah shrank from divine directives (see [Exodus 3:7–4:17](#); [Jeremiah 1:4–10](#)). Yet Jonah’s reluctance to accept God’s assignment is extreme, especially in his choice of Tarshish—probably the farthest known city from Joppa, in what is now Spain. And it is in part the degree of his rebellion that makes his ultimate obedience so compelling.

#### **The book of Jonah**

Fifth of the twelve Hebrew Bible Minor Prophets, the book of Jonah is distinct in two ways. Rather than focusing on God's promises, it tells a story. And where most Hebrew seers speak to and about Israel, this book centers on God's care for Gentiles.

The book has been described as satire, parable, folklore, and historical fact. However viewed, it is widely accepted as a persuasive portrayal of God's mercy toward the repentant—including those repenting of egregious wrongdoing.

## from **Section 3**

### 8 | [II Peter 3:9](#)

*The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

#### Translation

*The Lord isn't slow to do what he promised, as some people think. Rather, he is patient for your sake. He doesn't want to destroy anyone but wants all people to have an opportunity to turn to him and change the way they think and act.*

—GOD'S WORD Translation

At the time of this letter, it appeared unlikely that Christians' expectation of Christ Jesus' second coming would be fulfilled during their lifetime. In this chapter, the author addresses their disappointment.

First, he reminds them that God's perspective is not that of mortals—a thousand years is “as one day” to Him ([v. 8](#), a reference to [Psalms 90:4](#)). Then, in a possible allusion to [Habakkuk 2:3](#), he assures them that God does not tarry or delay (the meaning of *bradynō*, translated *slack*), but graciously provides opportunities for repentance.

### 10 | [Jonah 2:8, 9](#)

*They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy. But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord.*

#### Translation

*“Those who cling to worthless idols  
turn away from God's love for them.  
But I, with shouts of grateful praise,*

*will sacrifice to you.*

*What I have vowed I will make good.*

*I will say, ‘Salvation comes from the Lord.’ ”*

—New International Version

Jonah’s assertion parallels wording in two psalms: “I have hated them that regard lying vanities: but I trust in the Lord” ([Psalms 31:6](#)) and “Salvation belongeth unto the Lord” ([3:8](#)). Like Hannah’s prayer of thanksgiving (see [I Samuel 2:1–10](#)), Jonah’s prayer doesn’t include a single petition but affirms God’s power and willingness to deliver.

## from **Section 4**

### 12 | [Psalms 41:4, 8, 12](#)

*Lord, be merciful unto me: heal my soul; for I have sinned against thee. . . . An evil disease, say they, cleaveth fast unto him: and now that he lieth he shall rise up no more. . . . thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and settest me before thy face for ever.*

#### Translation

*“He has some fatal disease,” they say.*

*“He will never get out of that bed!” . . .*

*You have preserved my life because I am innocent;*

*you have brought me into your presence forever.*

—New Living Translation

A number of psalms associate sin with sickness. [Psalm 38](#), for example, laments, “There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin” ([v. 3](#)). And [Psalm 107](#) declares, “Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted”—but rejoices, “Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saveth them out of their distresses” ([vv. 17, 19](#)). Christ Jesus’ advent brought the good news that God’s purpose is to save and heal sinners, not to punish them.

**integrity:** pure and complete nature

### 13 | [John 5:2, 5, 6](#)

*Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. . . . And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years. When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole?*

Scene-setting details describe what is believed to be a gate (*market* was added by translators) for bringing sheep to the Temple for sacrifice. The pool of Bethesda was near the Temple, likely below street level, and was known for the phenomenon of the stirring of its water (see [v. 3](#)).

Bible authorities long puzzled over the configuration of the five porches. Then a 19th-century excavation revealed a rectangular pool, consisting of two basins divided by a wall. All four sides were flanked by porticoes, with a fifth portico across the central barrier. The southern basin is believed to have been a site for ritual bathing; the northern basin was a reservoir for replenishing fresh water in the southern pool.

**whole:** healthy; restored

## from Section 5

### 14 | [I Timothy 1:15](#)

*This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.*

Phrases confirming the truth of the writer's statements occur several times in the letters to Timothy and Titus (see also [I Timothy 3:1](#); [4:9](#); [II Timothy 2:11](#); [Titus 1:13](#); [3:8](#)). They usually signal important church doctrine—in this case, the Christly mission of salvation. The Revelator employs similar phrasing in the charge, “Write: for these words are true and faithful” ([Revelation 21:5](#)).

**worthy:** deserving

**acceptation:** favorable acceptance

### 15 | [Luke 7:37, 38, 40, 44–46](#)

*A woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. . . . And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. . . . And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.*

Kiss has different shades of meaning in this passage. In [verse 38](#), it is translated from the Greek *kataphileō*, indicating tender, fervent kisses. This term describes the kiss given to the prodigal son by his father upon the prodigal's return (see [Luke 15:20](#)). In the Master's declaration, “Thou gavest me no kiss” ([v. 45](#)), the term *philema* signifies a kiss of greeting or departure.

Jesus also illustrates the woman's loving service to him by emphasizing the quality of her ointment. That she uses a costly substance for his feet, deemed a lowlier part of the body, is a striking sign of humility and affection.

**alabaster:** nearly transparent white stone

**ointment:** oily substance used to soften or treat skin

**anointed:** rubbed with oil

## from **Section 6**

### Translation

#### 16 | II Timothy 2:19, 22

*Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.*

*... Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.*

...

*... “Everyone who says that he believes in the Lord must stop doing wrong.” ... Stay away from the evil desires of youth. Try hard to live right and to have faith, love, and peace. Work for these things together with those who have pure hearts and who trust in the Lord.*

—International Children’s Bible

#### 17 | II Timothy 3:14–17

*Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*

### Translation

*... you must continue with the things you have learned and found convincing. You know who taught you. Since childhood you have known the holy scriptures that help you to be wise in a way that leads to salvation through faith that is in Christ Jesus. Every scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for showing mistakes, for correcting, and for training character, so that the person who belongs to God can be equipped to do everything that is good.*

—Common English Bible

“All scripture” refers to the Hebrew Bible. While early versions of the Gospels may have been in circulation, they were not yet considered Scripture.



“Given by inspiration of God” is sometimes rendered “God-breathed.” One scholar writes: “If you believe that every part of Scripture is God-breathed, it will affect the way you read it. If you don’t believe that every part is God-breathed, it will not only affect the way you read it; it will affect whether you even pick it up to read at all.”

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Read a related article: "[Jonah gets a wake-up call](#)" by Sentinel staff.



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