



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

Everlasting Punishment

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from the **Golden Text**

Proverbs 14:34

Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.

Meanings for *s^e dāqâ* (the Hebrew noun rendered *righteousness*) can include justice, rectitude, and virtue. *Nation* (*gôy*) refers to non-Hebrews, or Gentiles. The writer expects Jew and Gentile alike to benefit by embracing a righteous life. A commentary explains: “Not power, not wealth, not a noble tradition, not a large population—none of these is the secret of a great nation. Only when justice and righteousness make power responsible and loyalty wise does a nation achieve a high status of nationhood.”

Verse 34 is an example of antithetical parallelism, a poetic form in which one clause is offset by its opposite. Used for emphasis, this device appears throughout scriptural poetry (see other instances in [Psalms 1:6](#); [Proverbs 10:2](#); [19:16](#); [Ecclesiastes 10:2](#)).

from the **Responsive Reading**

Isaiah 59:19–21

When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him. And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord; my spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever.

To many translators, the original language represented here by “a flood” actually depicts God’s saving activity rather than an enemy’s movement. The New Century Version offers, for instance, “The Lord will come quickly like a fast-flowing river.”

According to several sources, the words rendered “lift up a standard against” signify “drive away” or “put to flight.” Elsewhere, though, Isaiah portrays the demonstration of divine power and the rallying of supporters as raising a banner or ensign (see examples in [13:2](#); [18:3](#)).

The Apostle Paul quotes verse 20 in assuring Roman Christians of God’s salvation: “As it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob” ([Romans 11:26](#)).

from **Section 1**

3 | [Deuteronomy 29:10–12, 14, 15](#)

Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord your God; your captains of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, with all the men of Israel, your little ones, your wives, and thy stranger that is in thy camp, from the hewer of thy wood unto the drawer of thy water: that thou shouldest enter into covenant with the Lord thy God, and into his oath, which the Lord thy God maketh with thee this day: . . . Neither with you only do I make this covenant and this oath; but with him that standeth here with us this day before the Lord our God, and also with him that is not here with us this day.

Long after Moses’ farewell address, the Deuteronomists present it again—this time to a discouraged population who had been exiled from their land. A Bible authority paints this picture: “It was a people landless, demoralized, and confused—a people seeking to find a path of hope in a situation that seemed hopeless. . . . The very faith in the power of the LORD God that seemed to have been discredited and largely disowned by the people is now summoned back into being.”

Moses’ words make plain that God’s covenant encompasses individuals of every rank, from the highest (captains, elders, and officers) to the lowest (woodcutters and water carriers). “Him that is not here with us” enlarges his audience to all future generations.

5 | [Leviticus 19:18](#)

Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the Lord.

“Neighbor” was understood to mean everyone with whom one came into contact, not merely close associates or friends. One of many admonitions in a chapter about holiness, this command is cited by Christ Jesus as necessary to fulfill “all the law and the prophets” (see [Matthew 22:34–40](#)). The closing declaration, “I am the Lord,” occurs after other charges as well, establishing the motive and might behind each one (see also [vv. 10, 12, 14, 16](#)).

Scholars find direct correlations between this chapter and the book of James. ([Verse 18](#), for example, has related texts in [James 2:8](#); [5:9](#).)

6 | [I John 3:1, 9, 24](#)

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: . . . 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. . . . And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he

hath given us.

One commentary describes sin as “inconsistent with knowing the righteous, pure, sinless, and sin-destroying God Because of the presence and power of the indwelling Spirit of God, the Christian cannot go on sinning, for the Spirit of God has caused him/her to be . . . born of God.”

Menō, the Greek verb rendered *dwelleth* and *abideth*, is also translated *continue* and *remain* (see examples in [2:24](#), [28](#); [4:12](#), [13](#)). It appears over a hundred times in the New Testament (nearly two dozen in First John), often conveying God’s enduring love for us and encouraging our enduring trust in Him. While the English term *dwell* can allude to a temporary condition, *menō* usually indicates a steadfast, unwavering state.

Phrases such as “hereby we know” or “by this we know” recur in First John (see [2:3](#), [5](#); [3:16](#), [19](#), [24](#); [4:2](#), [6](#), [13](#); [5:2](#))—evidence of this author’s purpose to prove the truth of his message.

from **Section 2**

12 | [Isaiah 33:22](#)

The Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; he will save us.

In the ancient Near East, kings generally controlled all functions of the government—what is frequently divided today into the judicial, legislative, and executive branches. To the Hebrew, Yahweh’s rule is all-encompassing, as expressed in His covenant with Israel (see examples in [Exodus](#), [chaps. 21–23](#)).

from **Section 3**

14 | [Isaiah 1:18](#)

Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

Scarlet and crimson—bright red and bluish red, respectively—are often mentioned in Scripture in descriptions of fine clothing. Scarlet figures in accounts of sacrificial rituals as well (see, for instance, [Leviticus 14:52](#); [Numbers 19:6](#)).

Here *red* is used to portray sin, though not necessarily because of its association with the blood from sacrificial rites. Red dyes resulted in deep and permanent hues, and dyed garments could not be restored to their original white. This verse asserts that even fixed and unyielding sins will be cleansed and removed through divine action.

White is a common biblical symbol for purity. In a vision, Daniel is told, “Many shall be purified, and made white” ([Daniel 12:10](#)). And the Revelator promises, “He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment” ([Revelation 3:5](#)).

from **Section 4**

19 | [Matthew 9:2–8](#)

Behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee. And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth. And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. And he arose, and departed to his house. But when the multitudes saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men.

Convinced that only God can forgive sins, the scribes focus on their laws rather than on the cure of the palsied man. Jesus refuses to separate the two and demonstrates God’s forgiveness with healing.

“Be of good cheer” and “Be of good comfort” are reassurances common to the Master. In addition to this instance, he speaks them to his fearful disciples as he walks on the water and to the woman who touched his hem (see [Mark 6:50](#); [Luke 8:48](#)). And he answers the disciples’ question about things to come, “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” ([John 16:33](#)).

from **Section 5**

21 | [Luke 9:51–56](#)

It came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.

Throughout his Gospel, Luke emphasizes Jerusalem’s role in Jesus’ life—from the Temple visits as an infant and child to the post-resurrection events (see [2:21–52](#); [24:33–53](#)). A scriptural authority summarizes the Savior’s determination to travel to the holy city as “a clear vision of the Father’s will; . . . a willing acceptance of his fate; a firm resolution to meet it without failure or flinching; a first deliberate step in the direction of it”

Jesus’ destination is unacceptable to the Samaritans. Jews returning from exile in Babylon centuries earlier had excluded them from the Jerusalem Temple, and the Samaritans’ antagonism remained strong. Apparently forgetting Jesus’ teaching about love for one’s enemies (see [6:35](#)), James and John suggest repaying the Samaritans’ slight with violence. Their reference to Elias (Elijah) recalls the prophet’s vengeful acts against King Ahaziah (see [II Kings 1:10–12](#)). Now the Master announces a distinct doctrine of salvation, not destruction.

from **Section 6**

23 | [Romans 12:21](#)

Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

To overcome evil with good was an entirely new idea at this time. One source points out: “Nothing like this is to be found in the pagan classics; and nothing like it ever existed among pagan nations. Christianity alone has brought forth this lovely and mighty principle; and one design of it is to advance the welfare of man by promoting peace, harmony, and love.”

24 | Ecclesiastes 10:20

Curse not the king, no not in thy thought.

This admonition can be seen simply as a pragmatic warning not to risk displeasing a ruler. But scholars identify other implications. Kings in ancient Israel were to adhere to the demands of God’s covenant. ([Deuteronomy 17:14–20](#) outlines some of these expectations.) At the same time, Hebrew monarchs were viewed as appointed by God, and Jews were required to honor them. David, for instance, treats King Saul with respect even as the king seeks to kill him (see [I Samuel 24:1–15](#)).

A commentary suggests that for the Hebrew people kingship was “a means by which God ensures the delicate balances that must exist between individual liberties and obligations for the common good.”

Read a related article, “[Restoring the lost sense of health](#)” by Kathryn Paulson Grounds, at jsh.christianscience.com/restoring-the-lost-sense-of-health.

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