



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

## Everlasting Punishment

April 25–May 1, 2022



from the **Golden Text**

[Proverbs 14:34](#)

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

Meanings for *s<sup>e</sup> 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](#)).

**reproach:** strong disapproval

from the **Responsive Reading**

[Zechariah 7:9, 10](#)

*Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother: and oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart.*

**execute:** put into effect; perform

**compassions:** kindnesses

**oppress:** treat unfairly or harshly

## 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 Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob” ([Romans 11:26](#)).

**transgression:** wrongful act; sin

**seed:** children; descendants

## 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.

**oath:** sacred or solemn promise

#### 4 | [Deuteronomy 6:4, 5](#)

*Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.*

##### **Translation**

*"Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one [the only God]! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and mind and with all your soul and with all your strength [your entire being]."*

—Amplified® Bible

#### 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.*

##### **Translation**

*Stop being angry and don't try to take revenge. I am the LORD, and I command you to love others as much as you love yourself.*

—Contemporary English Version

"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.*

### **Translation**

*See how very much our Father loves us, for he calls us his children, . . . Those who have been born into God's family do not make a practice of sinning, because God's life is in them. So they can't keep on sinning, because they are children of God. . . . Those who obey God's commandments remain in fellowship with him, and he with them. And we know he lives in us because the Spirit he gave us lives in us.*

—New Living Translation

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**

## 7 | Psalms 89:8, 14

*O Lord God of hosts, who is a strong Lord like unto thee? or to thy faithfulness round about thee? . . . Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face.*

### **Translation**

*LORD God who rules over all, who is like you?*

*LORD, you are mighty. You are faithful in everything you do. . . .*

*Your kingdom is built on what is right and fair.*

*Your faithful love leads the way in front of you.*

—New International Reader’s Version

## 8 | Ecclesiastes 4:1

*So I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun: and behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power; but they had no comforter.*

### **Translation**

*Again, I observed all the oppression that takes place under the sun. I saw the tears of the oppressed, with no one to comfort them. The oppressors have great power, and their victims are helpless.*

—New Living Translation

## 9 | Ecclesiastes 5:8

*If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter: for he that is higher than the highest regardeth; and there be higher than they.*

### **Translation**

*If you witness the poor being oppressed or the violation of what is just and right in some territory, don’t be surprised because a high official watches over another, and yet others stand over them.*

—Common English Bible

**perverting:** misdirecting or corrupting from what is good and moral

**province:** region; country

## 11 | Isaiah 52:10

*The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.*

### **Translation**

*The LORD will use his holy power;  
he will save his people,  
and all the world will see it.*

—Good News Translation

## 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**

## 13 | [Lamentations 5:1, 15, 16, 21](#)

*Remember, O Lord, what is come upon us: consider, and behold our reproach. . . . The joy of our heart is ceased; our dance is turned into mourning. The crown is fallen from our head: woe unto us, that we have sinned! . . . Turn thou us unto thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned; renew our days as of old.*

### **Translation**

*LORD, think about what has happened to us.*

*Look at the shame our enemies have brought on us. . . .*

*There isn’t any joy in our hearts.*

*Our dancing has turned into mourning.*

*All of our honor is gone.*

*How terrible it is for us because we have sinned! . . .*

*LORD, please bring us back to you.*

*Then we can return.*

*Make our lives like new again.*

—New International Reader’s Version

## 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](#)).

## 15 | II Chronicles 7:14

*If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.*

### **Translation**

*... if they pray to me and repent and turn away from the evil they have been doing, then I will hear them in heaven, forgive their sins, and make their land prosperous again.*

—Good News Translation

## from **Section 4**

### 17 | [Psalms 67:1, 2](#)

*God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us; that thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations.*

### **Translation**

*Our God, be kind and bless us!*

*Be pleased and smile.*

*Then everyone on earth*

*will learn to follow you,*

*and all nations will see*

*your power to save us.*

—Contemporary English Version

## 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.

**be received up:** ascend



## 22 | Ephesians 4:31, 32

*Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*

### Translation

*Put aside all bitterness, losing your temper, anger, shouting, and slander, along with every other evil. Be kind, compassionate, and forgiving to each other, in the same way God forgave you in Christ.*

—Common English Bible

**clamour (clamor):** crying out; distressful wailing

**malice:** harmful desire or intention

## 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.”

## 25 | I Timothy 2:1–4

*I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.*

### **Translation**

*First, I tell you to pray for all people, asking God for what they need and being thankful to him. Pray for rulers and for all who have authority so that we can have quiet and peaceful lives full of worship and respect for God. This is good, and it pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to know the truth.*

—New Century Version

**exhort:** strongly encourage

**supplications:** earnest and humble requests

**intercessions:** prayers or petitions for someone else

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

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### **Resources quoted in this issue**

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**Cit. 3:** Keck, Leander E., et al., eds. *The New Interpreter’s Bible Commentary*. Vol. 1, *Introduction to the Pentateuch. Genesis. Exodus. Leviticus. Numbers. Deuteronomy*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2015.

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