



BIBLE LENS

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

Love

July 25–31, 2022

from the **Golden Text**

I John 4:7

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

—New King James Version®

Love appears in noun or verb form (including the word *beloved*) 15 times in [verses 7–12](#), conveying an unmistakable message about God to readers then and now. To know God goes far beyond gathering information about Him to embracing a profound understanding of His nature as Love. A Bible authority explains, “Love comes not from the best of the human spirit but from the character of God”

from the **Responsive Reading**

I John 4:8, 9, 11–13, 16

God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. . . . Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. . . . And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

While many people perceived God to be loving, First John defines Him as love itself—and the source of love in His children. The subject of love (including the directive to love) occurs so frequently in chapters 3–5 that the author has been called the “Apostle of Love.”

“The church’s love,” a commentator observes, “is progressively shaped by Christ and distilled of all corrupting naivete, bitterness, and cynicism. As this happens, we may come to realize that, finally, we do not interpret I John. It interprets us.”

from **Section 1**

1 | [Zephaniah 3:14, 17](#)

Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. . . . The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.

About fifty years before the Babylonian exile, the prophet Zephaniah was appointed to deliver a judgment against Judah. This short book focuses almost entirely on reproving Judah's injustice and corruption. In his third chapter, however, Zephaniah speaks of a faithful remnant (see [vv. 12, 13](#)), and the remaining text rings with hope.

God's "rest" doesn't allude to inactivity. *Hāraš*, the Hebrew term rendered *rest*, means to be quiet or silent.

3 | [Deuteronomy 7:9, 13](#)

Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations; . . . And he will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee.

In this chapter Moses addresses the Israelites before their entry into Canaan, arming them with reminders of God's covenant commitment and continuing care. The multiplication of His people is a common scriptural promise to those who love and obey Him, often illustrated by such images of great numbers as "stars of heaven" and "sand of the sea" (see examples in [Genesis 26:4](#); [Hosea 1:10](#)).

from **Section 2**

6 | [Daniel 6:1, 2, 4–7, 9, 11, 13, 15, 16, 19–23, 25–27](#)

It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom; and over these three presidents; of whom Daniel was first: . . . Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him. Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God. Then these presidents and princes assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him, King Darius, live for ever. All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counsellors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions. . . . Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree. . . . Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God. . . . Then answered they and said before the king, That Daniel, which is of the children of the captivity of Judah, regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day. . . . Know, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians is, That no decree nor statute which the king establisheth may be changed. Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. Now the king spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee. . . . Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions. And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel: and the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the

lions? Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever. My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt. Then was the king exceeding glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God. . . . Then king Darius wrote unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you. I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for he is the living God, and stedfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end. He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.

Darius' division of the kingdom into provinces followed the Persian model of government, in which deputies, or satraps, were assigned administrative and military control. In spite of being the instrument of Daniel's punishment, the king consistently expresses respect and affection for his deputy. With his own mandate irreversibly fixed, he works all day attempting to free Daniel and passes the night fasting for him (see [vv. 14, 18](#)). His early morning cry is described as *lamentable*—a term translated from the Aramaic word ^a *sîb*, relating to grief and affliction.

Daniel's experience in the lions' den (likely a deep pit for holding the animals) has been identified as a "trial by ordeal"—a practice based on the belief that innocence could be proved by survival of a life-threatening test. Here, though, Daniel's accusers have testified to his guilt. Their proposal is intended to end not only Daniel's power but his life. Instead, it brings about an undeniable demonstration of the sovereignty of the one God.

When Darius learns of Daniel's deliverance, he is "exceeding glad" and decrees universal reverence for "the living God." (In Scripture, "living God" distinguishes the God of Israel from lifeless idols; see other mentions in [Deuteronomy 5:26](#); [Psalms 84:2](#); [Matthew 16:16](#); [II Corinthians 6:16](#)).

from **Section 3**

8 | [Romans 6:14](#)

Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

Paul's contrast between the law and grace makes clear that rigid adherence to Hebrew law imposes condemnation for sin, not freedom from it. Only divine grace brings this liberation.

God's grace was a primary focus of early Christian teaching. While Jewish doctrine was generally interpreted to mean that salvation must be earned, Christians understood salvation to flow from God's love. "Grace acts like a force," reflects one source, "bringing victory over sin and power for righteousness."

9 | [James 4:8, 10](#)

Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded. . . . Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.

Noting the progression from emphasis on outward ritual purification to a cleansing of the heart, a scholar points out: “. . . men came to see that God required much more than an outward washing; and so [hand washing] came to stand for moral purity. . . . the ethical demand of the Bible is that a man’s words and deeds and emotions and thoughts should all be purified.”

11 | [Luke 19:2–10](#)

There was a man named Zacchæus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchæus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner. And Zacchæus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Unique to Luke’s Gospel, this story unfolds as Christ Jesus travels from Galilee to Jerusalem. Jericho, where he meets Zacchaeus, is his last stop. Earlier on this trip, the Master healed ten lepers (see [Luke 17:11–19](#)). His interchange with Zacchaeus redeems another kind of outcast—a Jew who is hated because of his occupation as a tax collector for Rome. Jesus must have seen in Zacchaeus something of the meaning of his name (innocent or pure).

Zacchaeus’ substantial repayments have some historical precedent (see examples in [Exodus 22:1](#); [Leviticus 6:5](#); [II Samuel 12:6](#)). But this compensation is much more than what was usually required. The Greek words translated *give* and *restore* (*didōmi*, *apodidōmi*) are in the present tense, showing that Zacchaeus’ reimbursements are already being made—and that his repentance is genuine.

Lost is translated from the Greek verb *apollymi*, signifying destroy or render ineffective. Other statements where Jesus uses this term—for instance, in his parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the prodigal son (see [Luke 15:4–32](#))—conclude with restoration to rightful status or place.

from **Section 4**

14 | [Acts 9:32–35](#)

It came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all quarters, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda. And there he found a certain man named Aeneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy. And Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately. And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord.

“Throughout all quarters” signifies “through the whole region” or “from place to place.” In this case, Peter travels northwest from Jerusalem toward the Mediterranean, stopping to visit believers in Lydda. Saron (known as Sharon in the Hebrew Bible) is a coastal plain, and may have been the name of a village near Lydda as well. Together with his healing of

Dorcas at Joppa (see [vv. 36–42](#)), Peter’s work in Lydda represents the spread of the gospel into Judea (see Jesus’ prediction at [1:8](#)).

Jesus’ followers regularly identified their healing and preaching with the Master’s God-given power (see, for example, [Acts 4:10; 8:12; 9:29; 16:18](#)). Here Peter likewise confirms that it is Christ that effects the cure. And while “all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron” may be an exaggeration, this single healing apparently inspires the conversion of most of the area’s population.

from **Section 5**

17 | [Romans 12:10](#)

Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another.

In ancient Greco-Roman society, competition for honor and recognition was common and differences in status widely acknowledged. With this charge Paul upends tradition. A commentator offers this explanation: “As a spiritual family, the church is to exhibit the intimacy and tenderness toward one another that mark the best earthly families.”

18 | [Galatians 5:13, 14](#)

Brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Paul is illustrating a practical demand of Christian liberty—love for each other—and simultaneously transforming the concepts of slavery and the law.

Bondage (a meaning of the Greek verb *douleuō*, rendered *serve* here) carried understandably negative connotations, especially in Hebrew history. But the apostle describes a new kind of servitude—loving service to one another. Similarly, the law had been depicted in terms of confining legalism. Now it is portrayed in a positive light—as fulfilled through the same loving service to fellow Christians.

from **Section 6**

20 | [II Corinthians 13:11, 14](#)

Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you. . . . The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.

To be of one mind is repeatedly called for in New Testament writing. [Romans 15:5](#) and [Philippians 2:2](#) use the term *like-minded*—and Paul continues with injunctions to “mind the same thing” and “be of the same mind in the Lord” ([Philippians 3:16; 4:2](#)). Uniting in spiritual perception, Paul assures the Corinthian church, leads to peace.

A scholar observes that “those who are within the Christian fellowship will have solved the problem of living together. They will be quite sure that the Christ who unites them is greater by far than the differences which may divide them.”

Khairō, the Greek word translated *farewell* here, is used in dozens of other passages in its basic sense—rejoice (see [Matthew 5:12](#), for example).

Read a related editorial, “[What Love can do](#)” by Carolyn B. Swan, at jsh.christianscience.com/what-love-can-do.

Resources quoted in this issue

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