



BIBLE LENS

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

Spirit

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from the **Golden Text**

John 6:63

It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing.

—New King James Version®

After multiplying food for a huge crowd and identifying himself with spiritual bread, Christ Jesus presents a detailed explanation of this image to Jewish inquisitors (see vv. [5–14](#), [32–35](#), [48–51](#)). He concludes with this unequivocal assertion about the sovereignty of Spirit and the impotence of matter, a radical teaching that prompts many believers to leave him. But Peter, representing his fellow disciples, confirms their understanding of Jesus' God-given role and recommits to following him (see vv. [66–69](#)).

from the **Responsive Reading**

Romans 8:1, 2

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

In the New Testament, *condemnation* often refers to the use of Mosaic law to censure sinners. But God condemns sin itself (see [v. 3](#)), sending His Son to save humanity from both sin and condemnation. In John's Gospel the Savior affirms, "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation"

(5:24).

To Paul, sin and death are not just closely associated but inseparable. One Bible authority points out: “Death is both the penalty of sin, thought of as transgression, and the final issue of sin, thought of as bondage. But for Paul the relation is even closer than either of these terms suggests. . . . To live in sin is not simply to face the sure doom of death; it is also to be dead in a real sense already.”

Romans 8:15

Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

Abba is the Aramaic word for Father. The term first appears in the New Testament in Jesus’ poignant plea to God before his crucifixion (see [Mark 14:36](#)), and in the early Christian community it became a common sacred way of addressing God. Each of the three times it occurs in the New Testament (see also [Galatians 4:6](#)), it is immediately followed by the Greek term for Father, *pater*.

A scholar proposes this clarification of verse 15: “Paul does not mean that there exists such a ‘spirit of bondage’; the phrase is a rhetorical formation based upon ‘Spirit of adoption’ The contrast is not so much between those who look upon God as master, tyrant, or judge, and those who approach him as Father with the confidence of children, as between those who have no hope for the future, and those who can confidently look forward to life and glory.”

from Section 1

2 | [Genesis 1:1, 2, 31](#)

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. . . . And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.

While most of Genesis is a history, its first chapter is a statement of faith. “In the beginning” indicates not a starting point or specific period but the eternal nature of God and His creation, emphatically recorded throughout the first chapter as good (see also [vv. 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31](#)).

“Without form” is translated from the Hebrew noun *tōhû*, elsewhere describing vanity, nothingness, and confusion (see examples in [I Samuel 12:21](#); [Job 6:18](#); [Isaiah 24:10](#)).

from Section 2

4 | [Psalms 143:10](#)

Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness.

*You are my God. Show me
what you want me to do,
and let your gentle Spirit
lead me in the right path.*

—Contemporary English Version

Some scriptural counsel depicts sin as crookedness (see instances in [Psalms 125:5](#); [Proverbs 2:15](#)). In this prayer, *uprightness* is translated from the Hebrew noun *mîšôr*, referring to a level place—the opposite of what is contorted or devious. Also rendered *straight* and *plain* (see [Isaiah 40:4](#); [Psalms 27:11](#)), *mîšôr* symbolizes moral rightness.

The last of seven “penitential psalms” (see [Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130](#), as well), [Psalm 143](#) is viewed as a plea for forgiveness, springing from trust in God’s steadfast love.

5 | [Psalms 119:117](#)

Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe: and I will have respect unto thy statutes continually.

Translation

*Support me so I can be saved
and so I can focus constantly on your statutes.*

—Common English Bible

6 | [Genesis 6:9, 13, 14](#)

Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God. . . . And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; . . . Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch.

“In his generations” is usually rendered “among the people of his time” or “among his contemporaries” in other Bible translations. Set during a period of violence (see also [vv. 5, 11, 12](#)), Noah’s story portrays God’s preservation of the good and just in the midst of evil or injustice.

The Hebrew term *tēbâ*, meaning box or ark, occurs in the Bible only to signify Noah’s vessel and the basket that hid the baby Moses (see [Exodus 2:3](#)). A different word (^א *rôn*) denotes the ark of the covenant, the sacred chest that held the Ten Commandments.

Gopher wood hasn't been identified, though pine, cedar, and cypress are proposed. Commentaries note the similarity of the word *gopher* to the term for pitch (*kōper*), the material employed to waterproof the ark.

8 | [Genesis 8:1](#)

God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark: and God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters assuaged.

God's remembering Noah doesn't imply that He had forgotten His devoted servant. The Hebrew verb meaning remember (*zākar*) also suggests mindfulness. The Psalmist asks, "What is man, that thou art mindful [*zākar*] of him?" ([Psalms 8:4](#)).

Rû^a h, the noun translated *wind* here, signifies breath or spirit as well. It appears repeatedly in Scripture to express divine life-giving power and presence—most notably in the movement of the spirit of God "upon the face of the waters" in the Genesis 1 account of creation.

10 | [Psalms 96:1](#)

O sing unto the Lord a new song: sing unto the Lord, all the earth.

Singing was a traditional means of honoring God in ancient Israel, and new songs were performed at special times of thanksgiving and celebration—for example, after military victories (see [Exodus 15:1–21](#); [Judges 5:1–31](#); [I Samuel 18:6, 7](#)).

[Psalm 96](#) is a song of David, rejoicing over the arrival of the ark of the covenant in Jerusalem (see [I Chronicles 16:1, 7, 23–33](#)). Mention of a "new song" occurs in five other verses in Psalms (see [33:3](#); [40:3](#); [98:1](#); [144:9](#); [149:1](#)) as well as in [Isaiah 42:10](#) and [Revelation 5:9](#); [14:3](#).

from **Section 3**

13 | [Matthew 12:22–28](#)

Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw. And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David? But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils. And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand: and if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand? And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.

Translation

Then a demon-possessed man, who was blind and couldn't speak, was brought to Jesus. He healed the man so that he could both speak and see. The crowd was amazed and asked, "Could it be that Jesus is the Son of David, the Messiah?" But when the Pharisees heard about the miracle, they said, "No wonder he can cast out demons. He gets his power from

Satan, the prince of demons.” Jesus knew their thoughts and replied, “Any kingdom divided by civil war is doomed. A town or family splintered by feuding will fall apart. And if Satan is casting out Satan, he is divided and fighting against himself. His own kingdom will not survive. And if I am empowered by Satan, what about your own exorcists? They cast out demons, too, so they will condemn you for what you have said. But if I am casting out demons by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God has arrived among you.”

—New Living Translation

While the people recognize this healing as evidence of Jesus’ Messiahship, the Pharisees attack his credibility by accusing him of serving Beelzebub, a heathen deity to whom the Jews ascribed all evil. The Master refutes this charge with three arguments: (1) Satan would not work against himself; (2) other Jews, including the Pharisees themselves, practice exorcism; (3) the spiritual authority illustrated in his healings signals the presence of God’s kingdom (see [vv. 25–28](#)).

from **Section 4**

15 | [Colossians 3:9, 10](#)

Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.

Translation

Do not lie to each other. You have left your old sinful life and the things you did before. You have begun to live the new life. In your new life you are being made new. You are becoming like the One who made you.

—International Children’s Bible

Committing to Christianity involved a thorough reorientation of thoughts, values, and goals. “Strip off the old self with all its activities,” paraphrases one source. “Put on the new self, which is ever freshly renewed until it reaches fullness of knowledge, in the likeness of its creator.”

16 | [John 3:1–7](#)

There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his

mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

At this time, baptism had been associated only with the conversion of Gentiles. To Nicodemus, a Pharisee of high standing, the need to submit to a rite of baptism might have seemed incomprehensible, if not humiliating.

A scriptural expert writes: “Nicodemus has, in one sense, ‘seen’ the signs; but he has not therefore ‘seen’ the kingdom of God. He may well (his words suggest he has) so understand what he has seen as to know that they are due to divine activity: . . . But to see the further thing that Christ’s signs convey and are, that cannot be the simple effect of Old Testament insight. . . . something additional is necessary, to which Judaism, in the person of the Baptist, had already witnessed—baptism by the Spirit.”

17 | [Galatians 5:16, 22, 23, 25](#)

Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. . . . the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. . . . If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

Translation

If you are guided by the Spirit, you won't obey your selfish desires. . . . God's Spirit makes us loving, happy, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle, and self-controlled. There is no law against behaving in any of these ways. . . . God's Spirit has given us life, and so we should follow the Spirit.

—Contemporary English Version

from **Section 5**

18 | [Isaiah 59:20, 21](#)

The Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord. As for me, this is my covenant with them, 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.

Translation

The LORD says to his people, “I will come to Jerusalem to defend you and to save all of you that turn from your sins. And I make a covenant with you: I have given you my power and my teachings to be yours forever, and from now on you are to obey me and teach your children and your descendants to obey me for all time to come.”

—Good News Translation

19 | Acts 8:26–31, 35–39

The angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet. Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. . . . Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.

Saul’s persecution of Christians had driven many of them from Jerusalem, with the unintended effect of spreading the teachings of Christ (see vv. 1–4). Philip the Evangelist, a different man from Philip the disciple (see Acts 6:1–5; 8:5), is among the scattered believers who bring the gospel to Samaria.

The term *Ethiopian* was generally used to describe dark-skinned people from the remotest area south of Egypt (a region of present-day Sudan, identified as Cush in the Hebrew Bible). *Candace* or *Kandake* is a title, not unlike the Roman title Caesar.

As a foreigner and a eunuch, Candace’s treasurer typified individuals rejected by the Jews. Although he was returning from worship in Jerusalem, the eunuch would not have been allowed in the Temple. Some scholars view this account as fulfilling the prophecy that God would gather “the outcasts of Israel” (*Isaiah* 56:8). One notes that in Luke’s record “. . . the promise of full inclusion among God’s people of foreigners and eunuchs finds its fulfillment not in Jerusalem and the temple, . . . but in [the] hearing and receiving of the gospel.”

20 | I Corinthians 3:16

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?

Translation

Do you not know and understand that you [the church] are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells [permanently] in you [collectively and individually]?

—Amplified® Bible

from **Section 6**

22 | [Isaiah 40:4, 5](#)

Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

Translation

Every valley will be filled in.

Every mountain and hill will be made level.

The rough ground will be smoothed out.

The rocky places will be made flat.

Then the glory of the LORD will appear.

And everyone will see it together.

The LORD has spoken.

—New International Reader’s Version

23 | [Isaiah 65:17, 18](#)

Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create.

Translation

“Look, I will make new heavens and a new earth,

and people will not remember the past

or think about those things.

My people will be happy forever

because of the things I will make.”

Read a related interview, “[How to ‘live in the Spirit’](https://jsh.christianscience.com/how-to-live-in-the-spirit)” by Rosalie Dunbar with contributions from Marian English, at jsh.christianscience.com/how-to-live-in-the-spirit.

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