



BIBLE LENS

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

Man

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from the **Golden Text**

[Deuteronomy 14:1](#)

Ye are the children of the Lord your God.

Moses is speaking these words, declaring that to be children of God is to be set apart as “a peculiar people unto himself” (v. 2). One scholar notes, “He was saying, in effect, ‘Let your life demonstrate the fact . . . that you belong to the Lord.’”

from the **Responsive Reading**

[Galatians 4:1, 2, 4, 5](#)

Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. . . . But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

Here the Apostle Paul is likening Christians to children, who need supervision and instruction until they reach maturity. In this metaphor, Jewish law is the guardian or tutor; Christ’s redemptive action is the heritage.

The apostle’s assertion that a child is no different than a servant relates to treatment, not position. Unlike servants, children are only temporarily under others’ control—and their promise of inheritance isn’t shared by their overseers. In the same way, believers’ subjection to the law lasts only until they perceive their full spiritual birthright through Christ.

Ephesians 1:3, 5, 11, 12

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: . . . having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, . . . in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.

In the Hebrew Bible, God’s will represented protection and guidance for His chosen people. Christianity expanded the concept of “chosen” to designate not only Jews but all who follow Christ.

Some scriptural authorities link the meaning of *predestinated* to the reference to love in verse 4. One has, “[God] planned, in his purpose of love, that we should be adopted as his own children through Jesus Christ.” God’s embracing love of those “who first trusted in Christ” makes them His own—and guarantees (or predestinates) their salvation.

Adoption is a potent image here. In Hebrew culture adoption was a vital way of providing orphans with shelter and security. And in Roman law adopted children were assured all the rights of those born into a family. This symbolism confirms that every adherent of Christ has the status of God’s heir.

from **Section 1**

3 | Galatians 3:3

Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?

Translation

You began your life in Christ by the Spirit. Now do you try to continue it by your own power?

—International Children’s Bible

Paul’s letter to the Galatians represents a critical point in early Christian theology. Church members sometimes argued that Gentile converts should be required to submit to the Judaic tradition of circumcision to show their commitment to Christianity. Paul’s response is clear: The fleshly practice of circumcision is a step backward to the old order, with its focus on the flesh. Christianity exemplifies the power of Spirit, which overcomes the flesh.

Epiteleō, the Greek verb rendered *made perfect* in this verse, encompasses accomplishment and completion. Spiritual maturity comes to the faithful only as they remain true to their “beginnings”—to Christ Jesus’ teachings.

4 | Colossians 1:3, 10–13

We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, . . . that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.

Translation

In our prayers for you we always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, . . . so that you will live the kind of life that honors and pleases the Lord in every way. You will produce fruit in every good work and grow in the knowledge of God. God will strengthen you with his own great power so that you will not give up when troubles come, but you will be patient. And you will joyfully give thanks to the Father who has made you able to have a share in all that he has prepared for his people in the kingdom of light. God has freed us from the power of darkness, and he brought us into the kingdom of his dear Son.

—New Century Version

“Walk worthy of the Lord” denotes a life in complete harmony with a Christly understanding of God. Similar phrasing occurs in [Ephesians 4:1](#): “Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,” and [I Thessalonians 2:12](#): “Walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.”

Meet is a translation of the Greek verb *hikanoō*, meaning enable. Elsewhere, Paul explains that God “made us able [*hikanoō*] ministers of the new testament” ([II Corinthians 3:6](#)). Some versions see *hikanoō* as signifying that God has qualified us—made us fit for or deserving of His kingdom.

from Section 2

6 | [Isaiah 2:22](#)

Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?

In Isaiah’s decisive admonition, *cease* is translated from the Hebrew verb *hādal*, implying total withdrawal or rejection. The man “whose breath is in his nostrils” appears in descriptions of Adam and of the entire race of people destroyed in the flood (see [Genesis 2:7; 7:22](#)). It is this man that is not “to be accounted of”—not to be esteemed or regarded.

7 | [Ephesians 4:22, 23, 24](#)

Put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; . . . put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

Translation

. . . get rid of your old way of life. That's because it has been made impure by the desire for things that lead you astray. You were taught to be made new in your thinking. . . . start living a new life. It is created to be truly good and holy, just as God is.

—New International Reader's Version

from Section 3

10 | [Luke 15:11–13, 17, 20–29, 31](#)

A certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. . . . And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! . . . And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and entreated him. And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: . . . And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.

Jesus' parable paints a picture of sinfulness that would have been considered unforgivable by Jews. And the prodigal's work as a swineherd would have indicated his total degradation—pigs were deemed unclean (see [Leviticus 11:7](#); [Isaiah 65:4](#)) and contact with them shameful. Yet the father joyfully bestows gifts at his son's return, portraying loving generosity in the face of flagrant wrongdoing.

Scholars view the elder son as symbolic of the Pharisees—self-righteous, prideful, and unwilling to welcome a repentant transgressor. Regardless of this attitude, his father addresses him as “son,” reassuring him of his uninterrupted status in the family. One Bible expert suggests, “If repentance for the prodigal son means learning to say ‘Father’ again, then for the elder son it means learning to say ‘brother’ again.”

Another source observes: “The parable is open-ended: it does not record the older brother's response. The religious leaders still had a chance to respond to Jesus' offer of the Kingdom.”

11 | I John 3:1

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.

Translation

See how much the Father has loved us! His love is so great that we are called God's children

—Good News Translation

from **Section 4**

12 | [Matthew 15:21–28](#)

Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

Apolyō, the Greek word rendered “send . . . away,” can also signify loose or set free—a possible allusion to the request for healing. It is the verb used in the Master's healing of the woman bowed together (see [Luke 13:12](#)).

As a Gentile, the Canaanite woman would have been disdained among Jews. Yet she appeals to Jesus as the Hebrew Messiah, calling him the son of David. Her persistence and humility prompt him to praise her great faith—a commendation recorded just one other time, in his healing of the centurion's servant (see [Matthew 8:10](#)).

13 | [Galatians 3:28](#)

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

Translation

There is [now no distinction in regard to salvation] neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you [who believe] are all one in Christ Jesus [no one can claim a spiritual superiority].

from **Section 5**

14 | II Timothy 3:16, 17

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

All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching the truth, rebuking error, correcting faults, and giving instruction for right living, so that the person who serves God may be fully qualified and equipped to do every kind of good deed.

—Good News Translation

15 | Psalms 37:23, 24, 27, 37

The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand. . . . Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell for evermore. . . . Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace.

Translation

*If you do what the LORD wants,
he will make certain
each step you take is sure.*

*The LORD will hold your hand,
and if you stumble,
you still won't fall. . . .*

*If you stop sinning
and start doing right,
you will keep living
and be secure forever. . . .*

*Think of the bright future
waiting for all the families*

*of honest,
innocent,
and peace-loving people.*

—Contemporary English Version

16 | Psalms 139:23, 24

Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Translation

*Examine me, God! Look at my heart!
Put me to the test! Know my anxious thoughts!
Look to see if there is any idolatrous way in me,
then lead me on the eternal path!*

—Common English Bible

Bahan (the Hebrew term rendered *try*) connotes the testing of metal to determine its quality—an image that occurs throughout the Bible. Job says, for example, “When he hath tried [*bāhan*] me, I shall come forth as gold” (Job 23:10). And Proverbs 17:3 has, “The fining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold: but the Lord trieth [*bāhan*] the hearts.” (*Bāhan* is translated *examine* in Psalms 26:2 and *prove* in Malachi 3:10.)

A New Testament writer describes the glorious outcome of a faith that has been tested: “That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (I Peter 1:7).

from **Section 6**

17 | II Corinthians 1:2–4

Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

Early Christians shared common greetings in their letters to each other. “Grace and peace” was a frequent salutation employed by Paul—similar to *šalôm*, the Jewish wish for *peace* that many followers had grown up with.

“Grace, the freely given, unmerited favor of God, is appropriately the greeting among believers,” remarks a commentary, “because the very life of faith and the basis of their having community together come about as a direct result of God’s grace poured into their lives. Grace is not only actively present at the beginning of the life of faith, but it is also the enduring ground of all of life”

18 | I Peter 4:10

As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

Translation

Each of you has been blessed with one of God’s many wonderful gifts to be used in the service of others. So use your gift well.

—Contemporary English Version

First Peter is a message of encouragement to a group of believers whose lives have changed dramatically since their conversion. Previously embraced in the social and cultural activities of their communities, they are now considered part of an unwelcome sectarian movement. In a passage urging mutual affection and generosity (see also [vv. 8, 9](#)), the author affirms that spiritual gifts aren’t personal possessions but God’s bestowals, to be used in service to one another.

One source reflects: “Passages like this one remind Christians today that faith requires community. Believers should be active members of local churches that are gathered for prayer, for mutual support, for celebration. They are also reminded that local churches should be places in which all members of the church share the particular gifts that God has given them.”

Read a related poem, “[Never too late](#)” by Darren Stone, at jsh.christianscience.com/never-too-late.

Resources quoted in this issue

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Cit. 10: Keck, Leander E., et al., eds. *The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary*. Vol. 8, *Luke, John*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2015; NLT Study Bible. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2017.

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