



BIBLE LENS

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

Soul and Body

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from the **Responsive Reading**

I Corinthians 9:24–27

Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

Paul's sports symbolism would have had immediate meaning to his readers. In addition to the Olympics held every four years in Olympia, the popular Isthmian Games took place biennially near Corinth (where the apostle had spent 18 months teaching; see [Acts 18:11](#)). As today, competing athletes were highly honored and winners feted.

In this image, Paul compares preparation for running and boxing to spiritual discipline. In the same way that athletes require rigorous training and self-control to achieve victory, Christians need wholehearted commitment to the mental "training" that leads to eternal salvation.

Castaway is translated from the Greek term *adokimos*, referring to one who is discredited. Elsewhere it is rendered *reprobate* (see example in [II Timothy 3:8](#)).

Romans 12:2

Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

In this verse, *world* is translated from the Greek noun *aiōn* rather than from the more common word *kosmos*. *Aiōn* signifies an era or period of time. (Some translations render it *age*.)

Beyond mere intellect, *mind* (Greek, *nous*) is viewed here as conveying perception or understanding. In this charge, the transforming activity applies to motives, affections, and behavior—to one’s entire being. A commentator explains it this way: “The essential man has been changed; now he lives, not a self-centred, but a Christ-centred life. . . . When Christ becomes the centre of life then we can present real worship, which is the offering of every moment and every action to God.”

from **Section 1**

5 | [Psalms 92:4](#)

Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy work: I will triumph in the works of thy hands.

Translation

*. . . everything you do
makes me happy,
and I sing joyful songs.*

—Contemporary English Version

from **Section 2**

7 | [Luke 16:13](#)

No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

“Jesus uses hyperbole,” a scholar notes, “in framing the potential conflict in loyalties to two lords: there is no middle ground between love and hate, which is to say, between devoted service and contempt. . . . God and wealth represent competing and incompatible claims and allegiances.” He adds, “. . . one can use wealth toward constructive ends that serve God, by releasing what one has and thereby making friends—not subordinate clients but friends—for eternity.”

8 | [Luke 11:34, 36](#)

The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. . . . If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light.

Translation

“The eye is the lamp of your body. When your eye is clear [spiritually perceptive, focused on God], your whole body also is full of light [benefiting from God’s precepts]. But when it is bad [spiritually blind], your body also is full of darkness [devoid of God’s word]. . . . So if your whole body is illuminated, with no dark part, it will be entirely bright [with light], as when the lamp gives you light with its bright rays.”

—Amplified® Bible

Today the eye is understood to take in outside light in order to make external things clear. But to ancient peoples, the eye itself emitted light, illuminating the whole individual.

In Jesus’ metaphor, light symbolizes the truth of the gospel. The spiritual perception that is “single”—simple, whole, or sound—leads to total devotion to light, with “no part dark.”

9 | [Romans 8:5, 9](#)

They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. . . . But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.

Translation

Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit. . . . But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you.

—New Living Translation

The Greek verb rendered *mind* in this text (*phroneō*) means to think, regard, or have an opinion. It appears as “set your affection” in [Colossians 3:2](#): “Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.” One source observes that “to surrender one’s thoughts and motives to the Spirit brings with it a quickened vitality through the whole man.”

10 | [II Corinthians 5:6, 8](#)

Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: . . . We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

Translation

So here is what we can always be certain about. As long as we are at home in our bodies, we are away from the Lord. . . . We are certain about that. We would rather be away from our bodies and at home with the Lord.

—New International Reader’s Version™

Paul affirms his confidence and boldness twice more in this letter to the Corinthian Church (see also [7:16](#); [10:1, 2](#)). And he is unequivocal in stating that the fleshly body fades in importance when one is “present with the Lord”—and vice versa.

“Life in this world is not the believer’s final reality,” a Bible authority reflects. “It must be seen for what it is, namely, being ‘away from the Lord’ (as a parallel to the ‘heavenly dwelling’ or ‘house from God’ in [5:1, 4](#)).”

from **Section 3**

11 | [Isaiah 42:1](#)

Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him.

In Scripture, *servant* often signifies an enslaved person rather than a hired laborer or trusted representative. Figuratively, the term is employed to portray humility. Soldiers, for example, frequently referred to themselves as their king’s servants. To the Hebrew people, service to God called for orienting one’s entire life to Him.

Israelites considered themselves the “chosen” of Yahweh, bound to Him in an unparalleled servant-master relationship. This divine election was later interpreted as Messianic prophecy, in which the servant was viewed as Christ Jesus (see [Matthew 12:17, 18](#), for instance).

13 | [Luke 7:2, 3, 6–10](#)

A certain centurion’s servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die. And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant. . . . Then Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself: for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof: wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. When Jesus heard

these things, he marvelled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick.

In Matthew's parallel account (see [Matthew 8:5–13](#)), the centurion approaches Jesus directly. Luke, by contrast, emphasizes the soldier's "outsider" status as a Gentile as well as his unique standing with the local Jews.

Unlike most occupying Roman forces, this officer is supportive of the Hebrew community, committing his own resources to building a synagogue. And he is comfortable enough with the Jews to request their help in making contact with Jesus (see also [vv. 4, 5](#)). They respond immediately, declaring the centurion's worthiness—a claim he humbly contradicts when he protests, "I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof: wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee."

"Set under authority" describes the centurion's military position. Not only does he give commands, as he asserts to Jesus, but he is also under the jurisdiction of his superiors. Well knowing the nature of authority, he perceives it in the Master—and depends on it in asking for his servant's healing.

from **Section 4**

14 | [III John 1:2](#)

Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.

Translation

My dear friend, I pray that everything may go well with you and that you may be in good health—as I know you are well in spirit.

—Good News Translation

15 | [Matthew 6:25, 32, 33](#)

Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? . . . (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Translation

“... don’t worry about the food you need to live. And don’t worry about the clothes you need for your body. Life is more important than food. And the body is more important than clothes. . . . All the people who don’t know God keep trying to get these things. And your Father in heaven knows that you need them. The thing you should want most is God’s kingdom and doing what God wants. Then all these other things you need will be given to you.”

—International Children’s Bible®

16 | I Peter 5:6, 7

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

Translation

. . . humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God [set aside self-righteous pride], so that He may exalt you [to a place of honor in His service] at the appropriate time, casting all your cares [all your anxieties, all your worries, and all your concerns, once and for all] on Him, for He cares about you [with deepest affection, and watches over you very carefully].

—Amplified® Bible

from **Section 5**

17 | Psalms 56:4

In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.

Translation

*I praise your promises!
I trust you and am not afraid.
No one can harm me.*

—Contemporary English Version

18 | Hebrews 12:12, 13

Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Translation

So put your hands to work. Strengthen your legs for the journey. “Make level paths for your feet to walk on.” . . . Then those who have trouble walking won’t be disabled. Instead, they will be healed.

—New International Reader’s Version™

“Hands which hang down” and “feeble knees” represent not only physical weakness but attitudes of weariness and discouragement. According to one scholar, readers of this passage recognized themselves: “a congregation stumbling and faltering, with some of them on the verge of dropping out of the race altogether. To them the word was clear: recover your strength, stay on course, . . . and accept the healing that will enable you to finish the race.”

19 | Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Translation

For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.

—New Living Translation

From the flaming sword in [Genesis 3:24](#) to the sword of judgment in [Revelation 19:21](#), swords are mentioned over four hundred times in the Bible (more than any other weapon). In ancient times blades were made of bronze or iron and were curved or straight, single- or double-edged. A two-edged sword was the sharpest and most effective of these weapons.

God’s Word—characterized here as lively, active, and penetrating—is seen as indicating both God Himself and His communication to His creation. John’s Gospel says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” ([1:1](#)). And Jesus declares, “It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” ([Matthew 4:4](#)).

20 | Acts 17:28

In him we live, and move, and have our being.

Translation

... he gives us the power to live, to move, and to be who we are.

—Contemporary English Version

21 | Acts 14:8–10

There sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked: the same heard Paul speak: who stedfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed, said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked.

Paul visited Lystra with Barnabas on Paul's first missionary journey. The hometown of Paul's later disciple Timothy, Lystra was located near the cities of Iconium and Derbe in what is now south-central Turkey.

Some sources compare this healing with Peter's cure of the lame man at the temple (see [Acts 3:1–11](#)). Both invalids have been afflicted from birth; both are viewed keenly by their healers; and both leap and walk. In the aftermath of each experience, opposition sets in—Peter is arrested by Jewish leaders, and Paul is stoned. Yet Peter triumphs over his detractors, and Paul is raised up and returns to Lystra to continue his ministry there (see [4:1–21](#); [14:19–23](#)). Presenting similar depictions is deemed intentional, validating Paul's stature and raising it to the level of respect accorded Peter.

from Section 6

24 | I Thessalonians 5:23, 24

And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.

Translation

Now, may the God of peace himself cause you to be completely dedicated to him; and may your spirit, soul, and body be kept intact and blameless at our Lord Jesus Christ's coming. The one who is calling you is faithful and will do this.

—Common English Bible

Concluding this epistle to believers at Thessalonica, Paul summarizes the Christian life—its joy, prayerfulness, thanksgiving, and other qualities outlined in [verses 16–22](#). Then he offers this heartfelt prayer for their consecration to God’s work, which God Himself will effect.

Whole, modifying spirit, soul, and body, is translated from the Greek adjective *holoklēros*. Used only one other place in Scripture (see [James 1:4](#)), *holoklēros* encompasses completeness and perfection.

Read a related editorial, “[Dimensions of healing](#)” by John Selover, at jsh.christianscience.com/dimensions-of-healing.

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