



He shall cover thee with
his feathers, and under his
wings shalt thou trust.

—Psalms 91:4



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Bible Lens

God the
Preserver
of Man

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God the Preserver of Man

from the Golden Text

Psalms 36:7

*How precious is your unfailing love, O God!
All humanity finds shelter in the shadow of
your wings.*

—New Living Translation

Wings are a frequent symbol in Scripture, especially for divine protection and shelter. In addition to biblical metaphors of mother birds, images of winged cherubim in early Jewish places of worship evoked safety and security.

from Section 1

2 | Deuteronomy 32:11, 12

*As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over
her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh
them, beareth them on her wings: so the Lord
alone did lead him.*

Eagles were considered nurturing and protective parents to their young, hovering under eaglets to catch them if they faltered while learning to fly. In Exodus 19:4 (Citation 5), God employs the symbol of being carried “on eagles’ wings” to remind the children of Israel of His care for them.

from Section 2

9 | I Kings 17:8, 9

*The word of the Lord came unto [Elijah], saying,
Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth
to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have com-
manded a widow woman there to sustain thee.*

Earlier in this chapter, Elijah had announced God’s decree of a long drought (see v. 1). During the resulting famine, God sends him to a poor widow in the Gentile territory of Zarephath. Both their needs are divinely met by a supply of meal and oil guaranteed to last through the drought (see v. 14).

Throughout this chapter, Elijah’s authority and God’s supremacy are repeatedly confirmed with such phrases as “according to the word of the Lord.” Later, after the healing of her son, the widow asserts, “Now by this I know ... that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth” (v. 24).

from Section 3

11 | Psalms 140:1, 2

*Deliver me, O Lord, from the evil man: pre-
serve me from the violent man; which imagine
mischiefs in their heart; continually are they
gathered together for war.*

Opposition to God’s will—and to His people—is a continuing subject of Psalms, and its verses frequently petition God for deliverance from these adversaries. As a commentator affirms, the Psalmist knows that “the plotter of evil is not beyond the reach of God, and the sufferer not without protection.”

13 | II Samuel 22:3

*[The Lord] is my shield, and the horn of my
salvation.*

Horn (Hebrew, *qeren*) can refer to musical instruments or animals’ horns, but its biblical use is largely symbolic. From projec-

An exploration of Bible citations from the *Christian Science Quarterly*® Bible Lessons

“... a lesson on which the prosperity of Christian Science largely depends.” —Mary Baker Eddy

tions at the altar of incense in the Temple, to Daniel’s visions, to the inspiration of the Revelator, horns represent power, vigor, and strength (see Exodus 30:2; Daniel 7:7, 8; Revelation 13:1, 17:12).

14 | Proverbs 1:17

Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird.

Sinners are warned here that wrong or foolish acts bring destruction. Even birds, cautions the writer, know better than to enter an obvious trap!

from Section 4

17 | Malachi 4:2

Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings.

The “Sun of righteousness”—a phrase used only here in the Bible—describes God; the rays of the sun are represented by wings. Malachi’s audience would have been familiar with the pagan image of a winged sun to symbolize deific protection and blessing. The prophet presents the symbol’s spiritual message—that righteousness originates with the one God, and that it is active everywhere, like the sun.

19 | Matthew 9:25

When the people were put forth, he went in, and took her by the hand, and the maid arose.

Christ Jesus’ action in removing the mourners and onlookers is conveyed by the Greek verb *ekballō*, a word that can imply vehemence. It occurs in descriptions of the Master’s casting out of devils (see example in

Mark 1:39) and in the charge to “cast out the beam out of thine own eye” (Matthew 7:5).

In touching the girl’s hand, Jesus violated a Hebrew law banning contact with a dead body—contact that was believed to render one unclean for a week. Rejecting this narrow definition of cleanness, the Master proved the power of spiritual purity to heal and redeem.

from Section 5

21 | Acts 27:1, 2

When it was determined that we should sail into Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners unto one named Julius, a centurion of Augustus’ band. And entering into a ship of Adramyttium, we launched, meaning to sail by the coasts of Asia.

References to “we” are viewed by some sources as evidence that the author of the book of Acts was a companion of Paul’s on this journey. The detailed eyewitness narrative could also have been drawn from an anonymous traveler’s diary.

The centurion Julius—unknown beyond this account—expresses remarkable generosity to Paul during the voyage, allowing him freedom to visit friends at Sidon and resisting the soldiers’ advice to kill all the prisoners after the shipwreck (see vv. 3, 43). Julius’s “band” was a Roman regiment, identified as imperial by the use of the Roman emperor’s title.

Resources quoted in this issue

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Cit. 11: Buttrick, George Arthur, Nolan B. Harmon, et al., eds. *The Interpreter’s Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes*. Vol. 4, Psalms, Proverbs. Nashville: Abingdon, 1951–57.

Prayer that disarms violence

By James Scott Rosebush

From the February 28, 2000, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*

There was a commotion in the hallway outside my office. Initially, I chalked it up to the noise of a cleaning crew, but since this was the middle of the afternoon, I grew more curious. Not long after that, we were all told to lock ourselves in our offices because our floor had been commandeered by gunmen who were attempting to take the president of our company hostage.

Alone, frightened, and instructed to stay in my office behind the desk, I had two resources at hand. One was a telephone, which I used to call a Christian Science practitioner to pray for my personal safety and for the security of all our employees. The other resource was my own appeal to the law of God to disperse this violence peacefully.

Although I don't remember now just how fast things happened, I know that my appeal to God developed quickly along several fronts. The first was my desire to replace intense fear with confidence in God and His ability to keep me and my colleagues safe. This included a strong petition for the safety of our president.

God's control of His spiritual universe is absolute; it is never intimidated by evil, invaded by terror, or compromised by violence. I affirmed that I and the others were, in fact, within that spiritual universe, safe within the everlasting arms of God, Love, as His children, His image and likeness. To help disperse the fear, I thought of the powerful and reassuring words in Psalm 91. As I reached the third and fourth verses, I could feel the fear begin to diminish and then leave me: "Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler."

I thought it was important for me to look beyond the outward conditions and to discern the power of God, encircling us. My task was to recognize the power of God, His goodness, His love for all His children, and His total control at that moment—right where our office was.

Last, and perhaps the hardest part, was prayer for the outlaws. I had to gain a certain degree of compassion for them in recognizing that their desire for personal, political, and financial security and acceptance may have led them on this spree. But the larger issue was their relation to God. As soon as I saw the situation in that light, I didn't feel like a victim anymore.

Now I shifted my prayer to understanding that these individuals were, in their true spiritual identity, the express image of their Father-Mother God, and that nothing could stand in the way of their realizing this. They were under the control of the same God who controlled me, and as God's children, they desired peace and harmony just as much as I did.

As it turned out, there was a peaceful settlement. Police SWAT teams isolated the terrorists in one office while the rest of the building was evacuated. Eventually the police were able to talk the predators out of their plan, and to apprehend them. Our president was safe.

Spiritual solutions can put an end to violence. Every time we pray and work on behalf of peace, we really do make the world a better place.

To read the entire article, which has been shortened to fit this page, go to jsh.christianscience.com/prayer-that-disarms-violence.