



Thou art my rock and
my fortress; therefore
for thy name's sake
lead me, and guide me.

—Psalms 31:3



Christian Science Sentinel
Bible Lens

Ancient and Modern
Necromancy, alias
Mesmerism and
Hypnotism, Denounced

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from the Responsive Reading

Psalms 31:1, 3

In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed: deliver me in thy righteousness.... For thou art my rock and my fortress; therefore for thy name's sake lead me, and guide me.

Like many prayers of ancient Israel, Psalm 31 alternates assertions of trust and heartfelt petitions for help. According to verses 9–13, the Psalmist is in great distress. Yet in addition to strong images of rock and fortress, his calls for divine help confidently describe God's shining face and kindness (see vv. 16 and 21).

Jesus' final words from the cross, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46), echo verse 5 of this psalm.

from Section 1

3 | Galatians 5:16

Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

Contrast between the spirit and the flesh is a frequent subject in Paul's letters to both the Galatians and the Romans. Fleshly works are unmistakable, he declares (see v. 19)—and he underscores his point with what has been called "a catalogue of vices and virtues" (see vv. 19–23). While the list isn't complete, it is comprehensive enough to remove any confusion about how to choose the things of God over the things of the body or the world.

from Section 2

5 | II Chronicles 33:2, 3

[Manasseh] did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord For he built again the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down, and he reared up altars for Baalim, and made groves, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them.

Elevated sites of worship known as "high places" are mentioned throughout the Old Testament. Although these sites usually had a pagan origin, the Israelites sometimes used them to worship the one God before the Temple was built (see I Kings 3:2, for instance). Most often, though, the "high places" remained places of idol worship (see example in II Kings 17:9–12).

Groves is translated from the Hebrew noun *'ašērā*, referring to a Canaanite goddess or to the pole on which her image was placed. Over time, groves became known simply as outdoor places of pagan worship. A commentary explains, "It was thought wrong to shut up the gods within walls, and hence trees were the first temples; and from the earliest times groves are mentioned in connection with religious worship."

from Section 3

9 | II John 1:3

Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

In the New Testament, believers shared common greetings in their letters to each

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

other. “Grace and peace” was a frequent salutation used by Paul—not unlike the Jewish wish *šālôm* (Hebrew for *peace*) many of the faithful had grown up with.

Repeated references to God as Father, however, represented a new understanding of Him. Where the Hebrew Bible sometimes mentions God as father—especially of Israel and of certain individuals—the New Testament repeatedly emphasizes God’s fatherhood as a close and intimate relation to all of His children. According to one source, “Only in Christianity was the thought of God’s personal, loving relationship to the individual developed. It is through the revelation of his Son that God is known as the Father, not merely of the Son but also of all believers.”

from Section 4

11 | Galatians 5:1

Stand fast ... in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

Freedom from bondage was a powerful theme throughout Israel’s history, often expressed by images of the breaking of yokes (see examples in Leviticus 26:13 and Jeremiah 28:11). Isaiah 58:6 asks, “Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?”

Jesus describes a positive sense of subservience as commitment to his teachings: “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke

is easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:29, 30).

from Section 5

13 | Acts 8:5, 9

Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them.... But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one.

In ancient times magic was seen as a way to control or predict human events—and even to manipulate the divine will. Although sorcery was strictly forbidden in Jewish law (see Deuteronomy 18:10–12, for example), Simon apparently enjoyed wide popular acclaim and was called by some “the great power of God” (v. 10).

Philip’s healing works (see v. 7) stand in stark contrast to Simon’s quackery. Philip openly preached the good news of “the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ” (v. 12). Simon’s secret “powers” were intended to glorify himself. The magician’s self-interest becomes conspicuous when he attempts to buy divine power, incurring Peter’s sharp censure, “Thy heart is not right in the sight of God” (v. 21).

Simon’s name is the source of the word *simony*—the practice of making monetary profit from something sacred.

Resources quoted in this issue

Cit. 5: Smith, William. *Smith’s Bible Dictionary*. Rev. ed. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004.

Cit. 9: Marshall, I. Howard. *The Epistles of John*. Grand Rapids, Mich, 1978.

When temptation comes ...

By Mary Metzner Trammell

From the April 17, 1995, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*

Temptation doesn't usually announce itself.

No, temptation usually sneaks up on us. It says seductively, "Just give in to me. I'm perfectly harmless. And I'm soooo attractive. Besides that, everyone *else* is doing what I'm trying to get you to do. So why shouldn't you?!"

Temptation is deceptive and persuasive. Yet meeting temptation head-on—standing strong against its allurements, facing it down—is part of our going forward spiritually, and in every other way.

Consider this statement about people who encounter temptation and prevail: "The best lesson of their lives is gained by crossing swords with temptation, with fear and the besetments of evil; insomuch as they thereby have tried their strength and proven it; insomuch as they have found their strength made perfect in weakness, and their fear is self-immolated" (Mary Baker Eddy, *Miscellaneous Writings 1883-1896*, p. 10).

There's nothing shameful about being tempted. Even Christ Jesus, the highest example Christians can look to, was at times subject to temptation. But his seamless mental purity safeguarded him. His sheer spirituality naturally repelled Satan—the "devil" known throughout the Bible as the chief adversary to goodness and to God.

A New Testament writer says this about Jesus' supreme example: "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:15, 16).

Just how does God help us when we're tempted? The same way he did Jesus—by sending us His *angels*. In the Bible, angels are, you might say, the opposite of devils. They're spiritual messages from God that defend us and comfort us with truth rather than lies.

One way or another, temptation talks to all of us. It tells us that some worthwhile end can be served by doing things in a less-than-spiritual way, a less-than-honest way, a less-than-God-impelled way. It tells us we can be happier (and maybe even closer to God!) if we engineer our affairs *humanly*, rather than let God direct them *divinely*. If we cut a few moral and ethical corners.

When we concede to these "ifs," we're being soft on the tempter. We're letting the devil do our thinking for us. We're letting lies convince us that satisfaction and true substance and power and status come from matter, that good doesn't come from Spirit. We're forgetting that we're the image of all that God is—that we're the spiritual reflection of Love and Life and Truth and perfectness.

We don't have to measure up to the devil's standards of success. God is "well pleased" (see Luke 3:22) with us just as we are—just as He created us—His beautiful and noble and thoroughly spiritual sons and daughters.

If, momentarily, we lose sight of these facts—God's angels are at hand to help us. They're at hand to remind us who we are, to "minister" to us, to help us stand strong. To urge us gently forward, and Godward.

To read the entire article, which has been adapted to fit this page, go to jsh.christianscience.com/when-temptation-comes.