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Every valley shall be exalted,
and every mountain and
hill shall be made low.

—Isaiah 40:4



Christian Science Sentinel

Bible Lens

Are Sin,
Disease, and
Death Real?

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Are Sin, Disease, and Death Real?

from the Responsive Reading

Isaiah 40:11

He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.

The familiar image of lambs carried by a shepherd was a sweet reminder of God's care for His people, especially to those in exile. Shepherds carried sheep to support them when injured, protect them from harm, or keep them from wandering or falling behind the flock. Jesus' parable of the lost sheep includes a similar word picture: "When he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing" (Luke 15:5).

Hebrews 12:12, 13

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.

References to healing the lame sometimes symbolize universal restoration and redemption in Scripture. This writer echoes Isaiah 35:3: "Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees"—part of a stirring chapter about divine salvation for the faithful.

A current paraphrase of v. 13 has, "Mark out a straight, smooth path for your feet so that those who follow you, though weak and lame, will not fall and hurt themselves but become strong." Scholars also note an allusion to Proverbs 4:26, 27: "Ponder the

path of thy feet Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil."

from Section 2

9 | Malachi 3:11

I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground.

The Hebrew term for *devourer* comes from the word *'ākal*, which simply means *eat*. In this verse, it refers to recurring plagues of locusts that devoured every growing thing in their path. Here *rebuke* is seen by some to signify not just reprimand, but deter or prohibit.

When the people demonstrate their faithfulness, God promises to "rebuke the devourer"—to destroy these scourges.

from Section 3

12 | I Corinthians 13:4–6

Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.

The Greek word *agapē*, rendered *charity* here, is most often translated *love*. During Jesus' ministry, he counseled this deep affection and kindness continually—for instance, in these words: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love [*agapē*] one to another" (John 13:35).

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

“In Paul’s view,” notes a commentary, “not only does Christian community entail interdependence among spiritual gifts (12:27), but those gifts lack authentication unless expressed through love.”

from Section 6

19 | John 11:17

When Jesus came, he found that [Lazarus] had lain in the grave four days already.

The four days’ time likely included a day for the news to reach Jesus, two days of waiting to travel, and a day’s journey to Bethany. By the time the Master arrived at Lazarus’s tomb, there would have been no question that his friend was dead, and no doubt about Lazarus’s restoration to life.

19 | John 11:41, 42

Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.

By voicing his gratitude to God aloud, Christ Jesus publicly declares his relation to God and affirms God’s healing power before any evidence of healing is apparent. A researcher writes, “If he had not uttered this thanksgiving, the multitude would have glorified *him* rather than his Father, nor would they have learned ... that he came forth from God.”

To learn more about the *Christian Science Quarterly* Bible Lessons, go to biblelesson.com.

from Section 7

21 | II Corinthians 4:6

God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul surely spoke from his heart. His own awakening on the road to Damascus—and his ensuing healing of blindness—were evidence of Christ’s light shining in his own consciousness.

Now he entreats and encourages the Corinthian Christians, probably referencing Isaiah 9:2: “The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light.”

22 | Luke 10:19

Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

Jesus speaks these words to the seventy disciples upon their victorious return from the missionary work he had given them. The Master confirms their Christly authority over every danger, including the “power of the enemy”—the devices of evil.

Resources quoted in this issue

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Cit. 12: Gaventa, Beverly Roberts., and David Petersen, eds. *The New Interpreters Bible: One-Volume Commentary*. Nashville, Tenn: Abingdon Press, 2010.

Cit. 19: Spence-Jones, Henry Donald Maurice, Joseph S. Exell, and Edward Mark Deems, eds. *The Pulpit Commentary*. London, 1880–1909. Also available at biblehub.com/commentaries.

Treading on serpents and scorpions

By Karen Arnold

From the October 5, 1998, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*

Have you ever had an experience that changed your life? A moment when you knew, *really knew*, that there could never be a time or place when you could be outside of your heavenly Father's loving care?

I had an experience like that twenty years ago in the Sahara. We had been driving from London to Cameroon and were four days outside of Timbuktu when we hit a blinding sandstorm. I remember how we soaked scarves with drinking water and wrapped them around our faces so that we could breathe. I remember how thick the air was and how the sand collected in small drifts around our feet. But more than anything else, I remember having an ear infection so severe that I had temporarily lost my hearing, and I was so weak that I could barely hold my head upright.

It was long past sunset when the storm died down and a friend put up my tent. I crawled in and lay down on top of my sleeping bag. Feeling too feverish and disoriented to pray in a well-reasoned way, I spent the next two hours mentally "singing" in my head hymns from the *Christian Science Hymnal*. I knew that even in the middle of the desert, God was with me and that I could never be outside of His care.

After dinner, my friend came to check on me and was puzzled by a soft rustling noise he heard from inside my tent. Since I wasn't able to hear the sound, I told him that he must have heard me tossing and turning. An hour later he returned, but this time when he heard the sound he searched my tent with a flashlight. Without realizing it, I had been sharing my small tent with a poisonous viper. For more than two hours I had tossed and turned just inches from where he lay. Yet I had been totally protected.

The earache was quickly healed, but in addition, the experience taught me a tremendous lesson. I had reached out to God for a specific healing, yet those same prayers had saved my life. No matter what the problem is, we are healed when we align ourselves with God's law and His view of things, and allow this view to become our own.

To God, our problem doesn't exist as a reality. Just as light can never be aware of darkness, God cannot be aware of anything unlike Himself. God knows and sees His creation as purely good. In *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* Mary Baker Eddy writes, "To infinite, ever-present Love, all is Love, and there is no error, no sin, sickness, nor death" (p. 567). And elsewhere this textbook declares, "Truth, Life, and Love are a law of annihilation to everything unlike themselves, because they declare nothing except God" (p. 243).

Christ Jesus, the greatest healer ever known, told his disciples, "Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you" (Luke 10:19). His words are as true now as they were centuries ago.

No matter what our circumstance or predicament, we can never be outside of our Father's loving care. God is everywhere, and His power is absolute. Therefore no matter where we are, the presence of God is a law of annihilation to anything unlike good.

To read the entire article, which has been shortened to fit this page, go to jsh.christianscience.com/treading-on-serpents-and-scorpions.