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Bless the Lord,
O my soul, and forget
not all his benefits.

—Psalms 103:2



Christian Science Sentinel
Bible Lens

Soul

August 12–18,
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from the Responsive Reading

Psalms 104:1, 2

Bless the Lord, O my soul.... Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment: who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain.

During their forty years in the wilderness, the Israelites were tent dwellers. Their tabernacle—designed to be God’s dwelling place on earth—was a beautifully appointed tent with ten colorfully woven curtains (see Exodus 26). The image of a tent curtain for the heavens appears again in Isaiah: “It is he ... that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in” (40:22).

from Section 2

9 | Exodus 17:1

All the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, according to the commandment of the Lord, and pitched in Rephidim: and there was no water for the people to drink.

The Hebrew people crossed several desert areas before reaching the Promised Land. That “all the congregation” had gathered in the wilderness of Sin indicates that they had been traveling by stages through narrower regions and that this area was large enough to accommodate all of them.

Rephidim is known not only as a place God provided water from a rock, but also as the site of a battle with the Amalekites. During the combat, Aaron and Hur supported Moses’ raised hands, signifying the di-

vine aid that ensured Joshua’s victory (see vv. 8–13).

9 | Exodus 17:5

The Lord said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go.

Most contemporary translations identify the river Moses previously struck as the Nile—a reference to his turning the water of the Egyptian river to blood as a sign of God’s power on behalf of Israel (see 7:20). The rod that deprived Egypt of drinking water is now wielded to provide the Hebrew nation lifesaving water in the desert.

The Apostle Paul draws a spiritual lesson from the divine provision described in verse 6, teaching that the people “drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ” (I Corinthians 10:4).

from Section 3

14 | Luke 5:4, 5

When he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.

Simon’s reply to Jesus’ request to let down the nets was likely one of surprise, not insubordination. Most fishing took place at night, when fish moved to shallow, warmer water. Yet their night fishing hadn’t yielded

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even a small catch, and they were already washing the nets in preparation for the following night.

Before this event, Jesus had healed Simon’s mother-in-law of a fever and crowds of people of multiple diseases (see 4:38–41). Now, the overwhelmingly large draught of fish elicits Simon’s spontaneous cry of humble unworthiness—and seals his commitment to follow the Master (see vv. 8–11).

from Section 4

19 | Matthew 17:24

When they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute money came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay tribute?

Tribute money was an annual Hebrew tax of two Greek drachmae, or two days’ worth of an average workingman’s earnings. It was paid by Jewish males over age twenty to maintain the Temple at Jerusalem (see Exodus 30:13–16).

After the Roman overlords destroyed the Temple in AD 70 in response to a Jewish revolt against Rome, they decreed that the annual payment be made for the support of their Temple of Jupiter instead—a tax Jews and Jewish Christians alike understandably opposed but were compelled to pay.

from Section 5

23 | Mark 7:36

And he charged them that they should tell no man: but the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it.

The Master’s reasons for secrecy aren’t known. Some sources believe he was protecting his ministry from both adulation and opposition; others, that he wanted to distance himself from so-called miracle workers who actively sought fame. Whatever his purpose in this and several other cases, Jesus’ request corresponded with his teaching that “the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven” are not given to everyone (see Matthew 13:10–13).

from Section 6

26 | Revelation 7:12

Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.

As *power* and *might* have similar meanings in English, so do the two Greek words used here, *dynamis* and *ischus*. However, neither alone conveys the complete picture of omnipotence. The first word emphasizes authority and ability; the second suggests strength and force.

Clarification: In the Bible Lens for “Sacrament” (July 8–14, 2019) the note for Matthew 26:31 stated that all of Jesus’ disciples forsook him. Though all initially fled (see v. 56), one of them was present at the crucifixion (see John 19:26). Traditionally, this disciple has been identified as John.

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'The blessing of the Lord'

The Father knows before you ask
Your need, beloved one.
His blessing rests on you and
yours;
His tender will is done.

And you shall claim all good
with joy;
No bitter, earthborn toll
Shall be upon your heritage,
The precious gift of Soul.

The blessing of the Lord enfolds
His children, and today
The riches of His love are yours
As you, expectant, pray.

By Maude De Verse Newton
From the November 22, 1947, issue of the
Christian Science Sentinel

Reflection not yearning

We need not yearn to bless or to
be blest.
As, satisfied with Soul's wise
government,
We image Love's immeasurable
content
With its own nature, perfectly
expressed,
We bless inevitably and are blest.

By Peter J. Henniker-Heaton
From the January 26, 1957, issue of the
Christian Science Sentinel

Soul's home

Today
let your consciousness
be owned by bliss
every corner
occupied by the glow of love
let freedom
fill your every thought
and all you know
be washed in pure light
from heaven's windows, blessed
by the brightness
of His glory,
and let joy
shout
from the rooftops of your mind.

By Bettie Gray
From the July 21 & 28, 2008, issue of the
Christian Science Sentinel

The joy of blessing

May the sun shine in your heart,
The rain nurture and refresh,
And may you feel God's presence
Each step of the way.
May your heart be bright with
promise,
May joy lighten your step,
May the shadows on your path
Become a cooling shade,
And may God be your companion
always.

By Margaret MacIsaac
From the December 20, 2004, issue of the
Christian Science Sentinel