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There is ... no condemnation
to them which are
in Christ Jesus.

—Romans 8:1



Christian Science Sentinel
Bible Lens

**Christ
Jesus**

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Christ Jesus

from the **Golden Text**

Romans 8:2

The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

In the Hebrew Bible, sin is often portrayed as a burden. For ancient Israelites, this burden was removed annually by a priestly ritual. On the Day of Atonement, or Yom Kippur, the high priest ceremonially placed community sins upon a goat and then banished it into the wilderness. This “scapegoat” was believed to free the people of their wrongdoing.

Paul’s letter to the Roman Christians promises freedom from sin not through ceremony but through the Christly understanding of salvation.

from the **Responsive Reading**

Galatians 3:28

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

Slavery provided the primary source of labor in the Roman Empire. Hebrew society, however, didn’t rely as heavily on slaves as workers—and its traditions placed greater restraints on slave owners than did Roman law. Early Christianity took another step forward, declaring equality for all who believed in Christ’s name.

Although Paul never formally called for the abolition of slavery, he makes clear in this

verse and throughout his writings that everyone is free in the sight of God.

from **Section 1**

1 | Isaiah 40:3

The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

All four Gospels cite the voice “that crieth in the wilderness” as a reference to John the Baptist (see Matthew 3:1–3, Mark 1:2–4, Luke 3:1–4, and John 1:19–23). And Christ Jesus himself testifies of John, “This is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee” (Matthew 11:10).

One early Jewish sect was formed with the mission of fulfilling the prophecy in Isaiah 40. Located near the Dead Sea at Qumran (the site of the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in the 20th century), this community practiced continual cleansing by water. But it was John’s life-changing baptism of repentance that truly prepared the way for Christ’s coming.

from **Section 2**

4 | Mark 1:22

They were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes.

Scribes were respected Hebrew scholars who assiduously guarded the letter of Jewish law, interpreting it by citing the opinions of their predecessors. Jesus’ unique

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

relation to God enabled him to speak with a single authoritative voice about God’s law. According to a commentator, “His formula was not ‘It hath been said,’ but ‘I say unto you.’”

Paul later equates scribes with the foolish, asking, “Where is the scribe?... hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?” (I Corinthians 1:20).

from Section 3

5 | Mark 2:16

When the scribes and Pharisees saw [Jesus] eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?

In this account, Jesus is at the home of Levi, sometimes identified as the disciple Matthew. As a publican, or tax collector, Levi is considered impure under Jewish law. The Pharisees rebuke Jesus for defiling his purity by eating with the unclean, something pious Jews would never do.

Christian doctrine condemned exclusivity: “By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles,... bond or free” (I Corinthians 12:13).

6 | Galatians 4:7

Thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

Earlier in this letter, the apostle declares, “There is neither male nor female” (3:28, Responsive Reading). According to one researcher, the use of male language here is a reflection of legal practices of the times. “In the new community created by the Spirit,”

writes this source, “women and men inherit the promises.”

from Section 6

13 | John 12:32

And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.

“Lifted up” is sometimes seen as a literal allusion to the raising of Jesus’ body on the cross. Most researchers, though, interpret this phrase to signify the Master’s resurrection and ascension.

The Greek word *helkō*, rendered *draw* here, also appears in Jesus’ declaration, “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw [*helkō*] him” (John 6:44).

15 | II Corinthians 9:15

Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.

Paul’s statement concludes a comprehensive message about generosity (see 8:9—9:15), part of a plea for donations to impoverished Christians in Jerusalem. His letter includes the encouragement, “God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work” (9:8).

It is this divine grace that is seen by many as God’s “unspeakable gift.”

Resources quoted in this issue

Cit. 4: Perowne, John J. S., Alexander F. Kirkpatrick, Frederic H. Chase, Reginald St. John Parry, and Alexander Nairne, eds. *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*. 58 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1882–1922. Also available at biblehub.com/commentaries.

Cit. 6: Kroeger, Catherine Clark, and Mary J. Evans. *The IVP Womens Bible Commentary*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002.

Lighten the burden

By Russ Gerber

From the September 14, 1998, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*

At last, the street in front of our office building is getting a makeover. It was a fun street to drive along, if you enjoy navigating around potholes.

On my way to lunch the other day, I noticed one of the workers chipping away with his pick at a small section of the old pavement. I knew he didn't have to do the entire repaving job alone, but for the moment it looked that way. One man. One pick. One very long road ahead of him. What an enormous burden such work would be for just one person.

When I came back from lunch, however, things were looking up. The worker was still there, picking away. At that same time, however, coming from the other end of the street was a bulldozer. It was clearing and lifting away loads of old pavement as though it were plowing through butter.

Maybe you've had times when it appeared you were alone, chipping away at some task. Just getting through all the day's activities may have seemed like too much of a load for one person to carry.

It helps to have a bulldozer. That's one way to characterize the power of Christ when it comes to lifting and clearing away a burdensome load. The Christ, God's power in action, is always here to uplift, strengthen, and heal us. Centuries ago, Jesus, the man who best expressed Christ, said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

He didn't say he would take away life's responsibilities. But he did offer a way to lighten any sense of burden. "Take my yoke upon you," he explained, "and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart.... For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30). No, meekness is not your

typical bulldozer approach. And yet meekness is a load-lifter.

Meekness is a powerful spiritual support to inspire and sustain us in whatever we do. This support is always here, of course, because Christ, the spirit of divine Truth and Love, is always here. Meekness clears away anything in our consciousness that would keep us from knowing Christ. The egotism of thinking in terms of *my* personal goals, *my* strength, *my* determination, tends to weigh us down by closing our eyes and our hearts to the uplifting power of Truth and Love.

When our day begins with submitting our hearts to God, when we love and obey His law, and do His will, the spirit of Truth and Love is expressed. Instead of feeling burdened with the tasks we need to accomplish, we're on top of things, refreshed, underpinned by our love for God and humanity. "Mortals have only to submit to the law of God, come into sympathy with it, and to let His will be done," writes Mary Baker Eddy in her *Miscellaneous Writings 1883-1896*. "This unbroken motion of the law of divine Love gives, to the weary and heavy-laden, rest" (p. 208).

So what if it appears there's a long stretch of road ahead of us? Maybe we will meet with some obstruction, some twists and turns, or even a few potholes. More important is the fact that we are not without powerful spiritual help, the right equipment, to keep our journey safe and our burden light. We have the help of Christ, the power of Truth and Love.

What a difference the right equipment makes.

To read the entire article, which has been shortened to fit this page, go to **jsh.christianscience.com/lighten-the-burden**.