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We will walk in the name
of the Lord our God
for ever and ever.

—Micah 4:5



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Bible Lens

**Probation
After Death**

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Probation After Death

from the Responsive Reading

Romans 6:17

God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.

For Paul, the “form of doctrine” delivered to the faithful is the teachings of Christ. Obeying it “from the heart” implies service that is willingly given, not compelled as a slave submits to a master.

from Section 2

6 | Genesis 5:22–24

Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters: and all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years: and Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.

Enoch’s earthly days were actually the shortest listed in the “book of the generations of Adam” (the fifth chapter of Genesis). Noah’s grandfather Methuselah lived for 969 years, for instance (see 5:27). Noah’s life is recorded at 950 years (see 9:29).

Walking is an image for conducting life in a certain manner, based on a common Hebrew idiom (see also Deuteronomy 5:33; I Kings 8:23; Micah 6:8). New Testament writers embraced this metaphor to describe the Christian life (see example in Colossians 1:10, Citation 23).

from Section 3

11 | II Timothy 4:5

Watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.

Watchfulness in this instruction alludes to sober-mindedness—interpreted by one source, “Keep thy coolness and presence of mind, . . . as one ever wakeful and ready.”

An evangelist’s work was to spread the gospel, distinguished from the activities of apostles, prophets, pastors, and teachers in common interpretations of Ephesians 4:11. Evangelists were usually itinerant rather than being connected with a particular church.

The precept rendered “make full proof of thy ministry” has also been translated, “Prove and show by good and substantial proof, that you are the true minister of God.”

from Section 4

14 | John 5:24

He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

Scriptural authorities agree that *condemnation* refers to the use of Mosaic law to censure sinners. By contrast, God condemns sin itself (see Romans 8:3), and sent His Son to save mankind from both sin and condemnation through his crucifixion and resurrection. “Believers may be chastened

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

of the Lord,” a commentator writes, “but will not be condemned with the world. By their union with Christ through faith, they are ... secured.”

17 | Colossians 3:3

Your life is hid with Christ in God.

Though life in Christ is hidden, suggests a scholar, “it is real, and one day, when all that is material has passed away, it will be revealed—manifested—as the only real life there is.”

from **Section 5**

18 | Acts 6:9

There arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen.

Libertines, also called Freedmen, are believed to have been either former slaves from Africa or Jews who had been Roman captives. After being liberated, they established their own synagogue in Jerusalem.

The accusations they bring against Stephen are calculated to agitate other Jews: blasphemy against the Temple and the Mosaic law. His defense, one of the longest speeches in the New Testament (see chap. 7), recounts God’s guidance of the early Hebrew patriarchs. But his concluding rebuke and his declaration that he sees “the Son of man standing on the right hand of God” enrage his accusers and lead to the first martyrdom in Christian history.

Noting Saul’s consent to Stephen’s death, the account introduces the “great persecu-

tion” (see 8:1). This period of focused affliction prompted many Christians to flee from Jerusalem, effectively spreading the gospel beyond Judea.

from **Section 6**

23 | Colossians 1:3, 5, 10

We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, ... for the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel; ... that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.

“Walk worthy of the Lord” depicts a life in complete harmony with a Christly understanding of God. Similar phrasing occurs in Ephesians 4:1: “Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called”; and First Thessalonians 2:12: “Walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.”

A common business term of the times, *laid up* (Greek, *apokeimai*) alludes to safe storage of goods. Ancient receipts show *apokeimai* in use for collected grain in a barn, treasure in a holy place, and books in a library. Here the storage metaphor represents the promise of hope for faithful believers in Christ.

Resources quoted in this issue

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Getting closer to God—step by step

By Sharon S. Jeffrey

From the July 2004 issue of *The Christian Science Journal*

It was time to check the propane tank out back to make sure we had enough fuel for the upcoming cold spell. But there was a steep, graveled incline down to the tank, and a family member asked if I could manage it safely. I offhandedly replied that it wouldn't be as difficult as walking comfortably on our deep pile carpeting. The truth is, walking of any kind wasn't all that easy. I was still being troubled occasionally by serious muscle damage in one of my feet after a fall about five years earlier.

The family member's response surprised me. Rather than commiserate, she gently encouraged me to consider Jesus' ability to walk on the water.

Strange as her response may sound, I knew she was onto something. You see, through my study of the Bible and of *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy, I've come to know God as a wholly good, all-loving Parent. The muscle damage—which seemed so permanent—didn't coincide with my view of God or with my understanding of myself as made in His image. So rather than just accept my current condition as unchangeable, I could do something about it.

As I prayed, the first thing that came to mind was this question: What was my motive for walking? Was it just to get a physical body from point A to point B? Yes—if I was thinking about myself in strictly material terms. But what I'd been learning about God and how He made me told me that I wasn't just some physical body living an uncertain and often limited existence. As the expression of God, who is Spirit, I was actually spiritual. And because I was spiritual, this meant that I could think of walking in spiritual terms: as the desire to make real prog-

ress, to move forward spiritually, and to accomplish something positive for others.

Wanting to approach movement from a more spiritual perspective, I began by studying references to walking in the Bible. Here are three of my favorites. "I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart" (Isaiah 38:3). "Walk humbly with thy God" (Micah 6:8). And, "We will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever" (Micah 4:5). What stood out to me about these passages was this: They were more about the attitude of the walker than the physical activity of walking. In short, the demand was that I move toward a more God-based mode of living.

Mrs. Eddy explained this progress Spiritward when she wrote, "Every step towards goodness is a departure from materiality, and is a tendency towards God, Spirit" (*Science and Health*, p. 213). With this statement as inspiration, I began to make a concerted effort for each step to be toward God and His/Her goodness, and away from self—away from self-righteousness, self-will, self-justification, and self-love. I was determined to keep my thought focused on God, Spirit, and off of matter and all its accompaniments.

As I prayed daily to be more Godlike in thought, word, and deed, I found that, before long, I was walking across the carpet—and every other surface—with complete ease and comfort. But the best benefit of all was how much closer I felt to God with each step.

To read the entire article, which has been adapted to fit this page, go to jsh.christianscience.com/getting-closer-to-god-step-by-step.