

A photograph of a person's hand holding a small white flower with a yellow center. The person is wearing a blue and white striped sweater. The background is blurred, showing a paved surface and another person's legs in the distance.

Be kindly affectioned
one to another
with brotherly love.

—Romans 12:10



Christian Science Sentinel
Bible Lens

**Everlasting
Punishment**

**October 26–
November 1,
2020**

Everlasting Punishment

from the Golden Text

Matthew 5:7

Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

Although this beatitude may seem natural to us today, it would have been radical to people of the time. Many expected sinners to be punished, not forgiven, and compassion was viewed by some as weakness. Jesus rejects this outlook.

To be merciful, scholars agree, denotes concrete acts of compassion rather than mere attitude or words of sympathy. A contemporary source offers this paraphrase: “You are blessed when you care. At the moment of being ‘care-full,’ you find yourselves cared for.”

from the Responsive Reading

Romans 14:10, 11

Why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.

Greek tradition designated a site in an open-air marketplace for judgment of human actions. Here Paul declares judgment to be the role of God and His Christ, and underscores his point by citing Isaiah 45:23. To the Corinthian Christians he writes, “We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ” (II Corinthians 5:10).

from Section 1

5 | I John 4:16

God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

While many people understood God to be loving, First John defines Him as love itself, and the source of love in His children. The subject of love—and the directive to love—occurs so frequently in First John 3–5 that the writer has been called the “Apostle of Love.”

“The church’s love,” a commentator suggests, “is progressively shaped by Christ and distilled of all corrupting naiveté, bitterness, and cynicism. As this happens, we may come to realize that, finally, we do not interpret I John. It interprets us.”

from Section 2

9 | Matthew 5:21, 22

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: but I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment.

Jesus greatly expands the import of the injunction against murder—“Thou shalt not kill”—in these verses. It is not only the act of killing but also the mental state leading to violence against others that breaks God’s law. A scholar writes, “Hatred and insult toward one’s brother are as serious violations of God’s will for his people as the overt act of murder.”

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

from Section 3

13 | Matthew 23:1, 8

Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, . . . One is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren.

Calling like-minded individuals brothers or sisters was an accepted tradition in Greek society. So it would have been natural to adopt the family image among Jesus’ followers. And from an account of the Apostolic Council circa AD 50, it’s clear that the term *brethren* included Gentile Christians (see Acts 15:23).

14 | Matthew 25:34–36

Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

Appearing only in Matthew’s Gospel, this parable-like story comes at the end of Jesus’ instruction to his disciples about things to come (see also chap. 24). He depicts the final judgment as an assessment of merciful acts—acts performed not to earn a place in heaven but as the outcome of a kind and generous spirit.

Resources quoted in this issue

GT: Peterson, Eugene H. *The Message, Remix: The Bible in Contemporary Language*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress Pub. Group, 2003.

Cit. 5: Keck, Leander E., et al., eds. *The New Interpreter’s Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes*. Vol. 12, *Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2, and 3 John, Jude, Revelation*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1996–2001.

Cit. 9: Laymon, Charles M. *The Interpreter’s One-Volume Commentary on the Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1971.

from Section 5

19 | Philemon 1:1, 2, 10

Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellow-labourer, and to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellow-soldier, and to the church in thy house: . . . I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds.

Sources believe Paul wrote this epistle, his only personal letter in the Bible, from Rome about AD 62. It is carried to Philemon, a Colossian Christian, by Philemon’s runaway slave, Onesimus—a man who has become a valuable help to Paul. Philemon would have had the right to punish Onesimus but apparently releases him to serve Paul (see Colossians 4:9).

Apphia is thought to have been Philemon’s wife or sister. Archippus was an active Christian worker who may also have been part of Philemon’s household (see Colossians 4:17).

“Prisoner of Jesus Christ” probably alludes to Paul’s house arrest in Rome. Elsewhere the apostle refers to himself as Christ’s slave or servant (Greek, *doulos*; see examples in Romans 1:1; Galatians 1:10). Here, though, *prisoner* is translated from the Greek term *desmios*, signifying captive. Paul’s statement is interpreted to mean that he was made a prisoner not by Christ but for Christ’s sake or cause.

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Elections, justice, and mercy

By Rosalie E. Dunbar

From the October 29, 2012, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*

During her lifetime, Mary Baker Eddy witnessed many elections, even the first political primaries when individual parties put up more than one candidate for consideration. She lived through the Civil War, the fallout from three presidential assassinations, and got a good look at national and local leaders of varying political views. All of these observations, plus her spiritual insight into the mental influences that can lead someone to succumb to pride, fear, dishonesty, greed, led to a very clear-eyed view of leaders and governments.

In an address Mrs. Eddy gave in 1898, she urged her listeners, “Pray for the prosperity of our country, ... that justice, mercy, and peace continue to characterize her government, and that they shall rule all nations. Pray that the divine presence may still guide and bless our chief magistrate, those associated with his executive trust, and our national judiciary; give to our congress wisdom, and uphold our nation with the right arm of His righteousness” (*Christian Science versus Pantheism*, p. 14).

Through the years, many have called for prayer in times of national crisis, and this only reinforces the timelessness and timeliness of Mrs. Eddy’s statement. Given the doubts about United States government and Congress that many Americans have voiced, such prayer can help turn the ship of state into healthier waters.

Justice, mercy, peace, and wisdom are qualities I often look for when examining my own thoughts about government. Am I exercising justice toward government officials, or am I jumping to conclusions with only some of the facts? This is where something Christ Jesus said in his Sermon on the Mount can be helpful: “Don’t condemn

others, and God won’t condemn you. God will be as hard on you as you are on others!” (Matthew 7:1, 2, Contemporary English Version). A sobering thought. It naturally leads to letting one’s own desire for mercy reveal a willingness within to exercise mercy toward others.

It isn’t always easy to pull back from judging political figures, especially when it is such a national pastime! Justice and mercy, however, would argue for a kinder look at our national leaders and the officials in our local communities. That doesn’t necessarily mean approving of their policies, but it does require recognizing that each person is, in essence, the son or daughter of God. As God’s creation, you, I, and everyone are subject to the government of divine Love and the divine law articulated in the Bible. And we are sustained and strengthened by relying on Love’s law.

The Ten Commandments and Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount form the core of this law, and the surrounding stories and experiences in the Bible reveal how that law can be applied to one’s daily life. To embrace these laws and let them form the essence of our thinking is to embrace justice, mercy, peace, and wisdom—and to make them our own. When they form our thoughts and prayers, they enable us to get past negative news reports or uncharitable emails to see the need to truly love and not condemn, to value and appreciate goodness wherever it appears, and to see this goodness as universal.