



The Lord is good to all:  
and his tender mercies  
are over all his works.

—Psalms 145:9



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**Bible Lens**

**Reality**

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## from Section 1

### 3 | Psalms 33:4

*The word of the Lord is right; and all his works are done in truth.*

Here *truth* is translated from the Hebrew word *’emûnâ*, often rendered *faithfulness* in the King James Bible. Lamentations 3:23 uses it to praise God: “Great is thy faithfulness [*’emûnâ*].” “All his works are done in truth” declares God’s works to be faithful, steadfast, and trustworthy.

To the Hebrew people, the divine Word was more than an utterance that represented God’s power; the Word itself had power. One commentator explains that “in Jewish thought God’s *word* not only *said* things; it *did* things.”

## from Section 2

### 7 | Joshua 24:14

*Put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord.*

Joshua speaks these words—among the last before his death—to a great assembly of Israelites after the crossing into Canaan. “The other side of the flood” describes Mesopotamia, the land of their ancestors, and is often interpreted as “beyond the Euphrates River.” There and in Egypt, as in the Promised Land, idol worship was the norm. In this account, Canaan is called the land of the Amorites after the name of a principal tribe there (see v. 15).

The people’s assurance “The Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey” is recognized as a binding covenant, “a statute and an ordinance in Shechem” (vv. 24, 25).

## from Section 3

### 12 | Isaiah 7:15

*Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good.*

“Butter and honey”—like the phrase “milk and honey”—alludes to choice foods or abundance. Many translators render *butter* as *curds*, a soft and thickened milk product similar to yogurt. Abraham offered this food to the three visitors who predicted the birth of Isaac, and David fed it to his hungry soldiers in the wilderness (see Genesis 18:8; II Samuel 17:29).

The phrase “that he may know” is sometimes interpreted “until he shall know.” The child referred to in this Messianic prophecy will be raised on the best food for the young until he reaches the age of maturity and wisdom.

### 14 | Luke 6:6, 7

*It came to pass also on another sabbath, that he entered into the synagogue and taught: and there was a man whose right hand was withered. And the scribes and Pharisees watched him, whether he would heal on the sabbath day; that they might find an accusation against him.*

Luke’s Gospel is the only one that specifies the man’s right hand. This hand was com-

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monly used for work, eating, and gesturing. Forced use of his left hand, which was considered unclean, would have made his disability and shame public.

The commandment to keep the Sabbath was taken seriously—and literally—by most Jews of the time, and failing to observe it was punishable with death. Rabbinic law did allow for giving help on the Sabbath to someone whose life was in danger. But since a withered hand wasn’t deemed life-threatening, and healing was considered work, the Jewish religious leaders try to bring a formal accusation against Jesus.

The Master’s response easily defeats this effort, and the subsequent healing answers his rhetorical question, “Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it?” (v. 9).

## from Section 4

### 16 | Luke 10:41, 42

*Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.*

This story presents a teaching moment: Even devotion to hospitality, a core element in the spread of the gospel of Christ, shouldn’t replace hearing God’s Word. But Jesus expresses great care in his reproof, evidenced in his repetition, “Martha, Martha.” He is recorded as speaking this way one other time in his ministry. At the last supper he foresees Simon Peter’s denial of him, and begins his counsel, “Simon, Simon” (see 22:31).

Mary’s position “at Jesus’ feet” identifies her as a disciple—an unusual status for a woman, as rabbis did not teach women. Luke, however, notes several female believers (see examples in 8:2, 3; Acts 16:14, 15).

## from Section 5

### 20 | Philippians 4:1

*My brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.*

Paul’s relationship with the church at Philippi was apparently a longstanding and happy one. Earlier in this letter he says, “I thank my God upon every remembrance of you” and “I have you in my heart” (1:3, 7). This community of Christians has received him and sent him gifts, and now he shares his loving counsel with them—including the charge to remain joyful in every circumstance.

Scholars point out that the crown referred to in this verse is usually given to a victorious athlete or an honored guest. One explains, “It is as if Paul said that the Philippians were the crown of all his toil; it is as if he said that at the final banquet of God they were his festal crown.”

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#### Resources quoted in this issue

**Cit. 3:** Barclay, William. *New Testament Words*. London: SCM Press LTD, 1974.

**Cit. 20:** Barclay, William. *The Daily Study Bible: The Letters to Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*. Edinburgh: Saint Andrew, 1955. Revised and updated by Saint Andrew, 2001. Reprinted as *The New Daily Study Bible: The Letters to Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001–04.



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