

December 9 - Subject: God the Preserver of Man

DEAR FRIENDS: Mary Baker Eddy gave her students 26 subjects for weekly Bible Lessons, to be covered twice yearly. Flowing through the year in her order of the subjects, we hereby present fresh views of each one by outstanding Christian Scientists. In this way, we hope to partake with you of new unfoldments of her infinite revelation.

Our first selection is from — TALKS ON THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES by Peggy M. Brook. The other selection is from CHRISTIAN SCIENCE IN GERMANY— by Frances Thurber Seal.

ACTS 27: 14–25

VERSES 14-20. This story has a wonderful sequence if you interpret it symbolically. For instance, you may start off on your journey from sense to Soul with an assurance of Love, and of Love’s protection and loving care, but if you don’t listen to the warning voice of Truth, you often find yourself tossed hither and thither by the waves of mortal mind, as they were here. You’re sometimes not willing to listen to spiritual things until everything has gone awry for you; then you begin to wake up. Mrs. Eddy writes, “Waking to Christ’s demand, mortals experience suffering. This causes them, even as drowning men, to make vigorous efforts to save themselves; and through Christ’s precious love these efforts are crowned with success” (S. & H. 22: 6-10).

Sooner or later in your life experience you find that unless you listen to the voice of Truth, you come to a point where you seem to be drowning, and it may be the only way to make you listen, as it was in this case. These men weren’t willing to listen until all hope of saving themselves through their own efforts had faded. It’s interesting, if you follow this story through in detail, to see how exactly it patterns the life experience of many of us. For instance, the fact that the sun and the stars had disappeared for them would seem to symbolize that at this point, the point before we accept the spiritual way, even the old landmarks we are accustomed to relying on fail. It is so true, though, always, that the darkest hour precedes the dawn.

MIND as Spirit (Chapter 27: 21-38). The parent Mind brings spiritual discernment, the ability to stand firm on the side of Spirit, and to let Spirit duly feed and clothe every situation (see S. & H. 507: 3-6).

VERSES 21-25. So often in the tone of Spirit, particularly in the latter part of Acts, the moral courage which stands forth and takes the side of Spirit is brought out. Mrs. Eddy says, “Moral and spiritual might belong to Spirit, who holds the ‘wind in His fists’; and this teaching accords with Science and harmony. Your influence for good depends upon the weight you throw into the right scale. The good you do and embody gives you the only power obtainable. Evil is not power. It is a mockery of strength, which ere long betrays its weakness and falls, never to rise” (S. & H. 192: 17-19, 21-26). She says also, “Let us remember that the great Metaphysician healed the sick, raised the dead, and commanded even the winds and waves, which obeyed him through spiritual ascendancy alone” (Mess. 01, 19: 16-19).

VERSES 27- 44. Here Paul didn't calm the storm, but everybody was safe. Mr. Doorly once said something which I find very comforting; he said that Jesus on one occasion wasn't able to still the storm immediately, but he walked over the waves. Sometimes when you are going through a difficult experience and you don't seem able to meet it at once, you may find it a great comfort to think, "I may not be able to still the storm at the moment, but I'm certainly going to walk right over the waves." When you do that, you find that eventually it doesn't seem a storm to you at all; you find that the storm has been stilled as far as you're concerned. The determination to take the side of Spirit, and the moral courage to take it, does eventually still a storm. And even if you don't see it stilled at once, you can always walk over the waves. Mrs. Eddy says, "Rise in the strength of Spirit to resist all that is unlike good. God has made man capable of this, and nothing can vitiate the ability and power divinely bestowed on man" (S. & H. 393: 12-15) — nothing can! There's no opposition to Spirit, because Spirit is the only.

VERSE 29. "they cast four anchors out of the stern" — they turned to the divine infinite calculus of Spirit "and wished for the day" — the "day" of Life, Truth, and Love.

VERSES 30-32. In this infinite calculus of Spirit every reflection is vital and no idea can be done without. All the way through this story of Acts we have seen how important it is for every man to take up the strain and fulfil his individuality, in order that the true collective ideal may be manifest in human experience. Every man is important to the whole. Throughout Acts there is such a clear sense of the one man, meaning all men as God knows them.

VERSES 33-36. I love the sense of naturalness and normality that is introduced with this incident. Can't you imagine that scene? Here were these people tossed about for days in the grip of a tremendous storm, losing all hope of their lives being preserved, and then suddenly a passenger who is a prisoner takes command of the situation and tells them that God has spoken to him and that they will be saved. Can't you visualize how extraordinary and almost supernatural this event must have appeared to those frightened travellers? But the understanding of the fundamental spiritual nature of being always brings a sense of absolute naturalness into such a situation, and so Paul said quite simply "Take some meat." Spirit says, "Be normal; be natural," and sometimes when you haven't got the strength of Spirit to take a stand about something because you're fearful, and then you think of the absolute naturalness of spiritual being; it quiets fear. When someone is going through a tough time, to suggest something quite ordinary like a meal or something to drink often relieves the tension. Paul; was implying that there was nothing extraordinary going on, and so he said, in effect, "Let's have a meal; you're all going to be quite safe."

INTRODUCTION

In 1896 an American family started on a trip around the world. One of the farewell presents sent to them was a copy of *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, by Mary Baker Eddy. After the long journey the wife and children stopped over in Dresden, Germany, for the winter, to enjoy the music and art of that city. During these quiet months the lady studied *Science and Health* earnestly. She was deeply interested, and talked with those whom she met socially of this wonderful book and the truth it contained.

In the early spring of 1897 they returned to America, coming into the port of New York. On the following Sunday morning they attended service in Second Church of Christ, Scientist, New York, and at the close of this service the lady sought the First Reader, Mrs. Laura Lathrop, who was also a teacher, and told her most enthusiastically of her experience in receiving the book and reading it, and that she had told the people in Dresden of it and had promised them that as soon as she reached America she would ask that a worker be sent to introduce Christian Science and establish it there. There was much to be done to buildup the Christian Science work in our own city of New York, at that time the second largest city in the world, and little thought was given to the request to send a worker abroad; but the desire to have the Truth go out to the German people was very close to this woman's heart, and a few months later she returned and renewed her request. This time her plea reached the heart of our teacher, Mrs. Lathrop, who promised to send someone to carry the Truth to these people. The following day Mrs. Lathrop sent for me, told me this story, and said that she felt that this was a call from God, and I was the one to answer it and go forth to do this work.

Frances Thurber Seal
May, 1931

...I had found Christian Science less than one year before. It had come to me as a gift from God, bringing into a hopeless life divine promise. It gave me a reason for being, a glorious prospect of activity and usefulness.

I loved this Truth and hoped to grow in understanding and to be useful to the Cause of Christian Science, but that I should be considered for such missionary work as carrying this Science to a foreign land and establishing it there, seemed an impossible thing. Nevertheless, this was exactly what my teacher directed me to do.

I reminded her that I knew almost nothing of Christian Science as yet, and that there were older students who were much better prepared in every way, but she insisted that I had the necessary qualifications. I told her that I did not know how to give a treatment; but she said, "Never mind, you have love, and the qualities of obedience and honesty, and they will carry you through; and God will show you how to do the work."

I then said I did not know one word of German, and had no money with which to go abroad and live in a foreign city.

She quickly overruled these objections, and assured me that everyone in Germany spoke English. Later I found this was a mistake, and that very few knew English. A member of the church lent the money to make the journey and to maintain me for some time after I reached Germany. I repaid this money with interest as quickly as possible. It was difficult, but divine Love sustained me. My material needs were few, and I wanted to be free from any financial obligation.

Up to this time I had never done any healing work, but two cases came to me after I had promised to go in obedience to the call. One was of a German–American woman who had been a sufferer from rheumatism for twelve years. She said this was caused many years before by standing for hours in the rain to watch the funeral procession of the first Emperor Wilhelm. She was healed during our only interview. I did not treat her, but simply saw the nothingness of the disease and her belief in it as she told me the story. I tell of this case because I had several cases of rheumatism after I went to Germany to live, that were believed to have been contracted at the same time and in the same way, and they were all healed.

The other case was that of an aged lady who was said to be dying of cancer. She was healed in two visits, and entirely through seeing and voicing the truth of being. My joy was very great when she came to see me off at the ship a week later. These cases gave me courage, for I knew that nothing in me could have done these works. Only God Himself could have dispelled these terrible shadows.

CHAPTER TWO

I sailed from New York on an afternoon in December, 1897, on a nine–day steamer, for Hamburg. We did not reach our destination, however, until the thirteenth day, as we ran into a hurricane which lasted four days and blew us many miles out of our course, crippling the ship and doing much damage to the cargo. It was so severe that a number of valuable horses in the cargo were injured so that they had to be shot, although every effort was made to save them.

The passengers were packed in their berths with bolsters to protect them, and were strapped in so that they would not be thrown out, but, notwithstanding the care that was taken, a number were thrown from their berths and sustained serious injuries. It being mid–winter, there were only a few first–class passengers, most of them unaccustomed to the sea and filled with fear. It was my first trip across the ocean, and, but for the firm conviction that God had called me to do His work in Germany, and that His presence was with me and would sustain and protect me under all conditions, it would have been a terrifying experience; but at no time had I any thought of fear, and with the help of a steward I went to meals, and was the only passenger at the table after the storm became violent. Even though strapped in my berth at night, I spent my time reading my books and praying, striving to find the Christ.

Just before I sailed Mrs. Eddy had given to the field a new book, Miscellaneous Writings, made up of letters and addresses embodying her teachings. She announced that this book was to be the only teacher for the field for a year, and both teachers and students should study it and thus gain knowledge of the letter and the spirit of Christian Science. I read this book through very quickly, obeying the mandate of the "voice from heaven," "Take it and eat it up" (Revelation X:9). The truths found there and in the textbook so illumined my thought that it was lifted above the storm into the peace of God.

On the fourth day of the storm I received a note signed by one of my table companions of the first days of the voyage, the wife of a clergyman, asking if several of the ladies might come to my cabin that evening. They came, assisted by stewardesses, and we sat around on the couch and on the floor. They told me that they had come because I was the only person on board who seemed to have no fear, and they wanted me to tell them how I could be happy in the midst of such a storm, knowing that the ship might go down at any moment. I replied with a smile, "The ship will not go down." They asked how anyone could be certain of that. I told them it was a very precious and sacred secret but I would share it with them if they wished, that God was sending me to Europe on a glorious mission, and that He would certainly not drown me on the way. At their request I talked to them of Christian Science for nearly an hour, telling them the simple basic truths and calling their attention to Jesus' teaching, and read to them the story of his overcoming the storm with his "Peace, be still." We were no longer thinking in matter, but were hearing the voice of Christ saying as of old: "Be of good cheer, it is I. Be not afraid" (Mark VI:50). They were no longer fearful; the spirit of Truth had entered their hearts; and suddenly one of them exclaimed: "It is quiet. The storm has ceased!" It was ended, and with awe they arose and went quietly to their cabins.

Two days later the captain came to me and said that there was an almost unanimous request that I should conduct the Sunday service in the salon the following day. I did so, taking the parts of both the First Reader and Second Reader, as there were no other Christian Scientists on board. Two clergymen and two physicians, with their wives, were present. All thanked me for the reading, and three asked for an address where the textbook, Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures, by Mary Baker Eddy, might be obtained. Years afterward I learned that two of the ladies had become active Christian Scientists.

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