

The **Bible** Unpacked

Comprehensive Study Series

A compilation of the Bible's teaching
for believers established in the faith

paul mallison

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Comprehensive Study Series

A compilation of the Bible's teaching
for believers established in the faith

19. God's Care of His People

Composed by Paul Mallison

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A Quick Word

This series of studies aims to present a compilation of the Bible's teachings in a clear and readable order. There are 40 booklets in the series, based on the 40 chapters of the book *The Bible Unpacked - Comprehensive Edition*. Each booklet has two sections, which can be used for two or more studies.

See *Topics in This Series* towards the end of this booklet for a full listing of all the topics. Note that studying booklets alternatively from the two major sections (*What to Know* and *What to Do*) would add variety.

The material contains Bible verses. Before the verses are headings, which reflect what the verses say – in particular the parts of the verses in *italics*. The verses are sometimes followed by a comment.

The verses often have a brief introduction. Usually these state who is speaking and often who they are speaking to. Apart from God and Jesus Christ, the main speakers are:

- Moses – who led the Israelites out of Egypt and taught them God's laws;
- David – Israel's greatest king who wrote many of the psalms, most of which are essentially prayers;
- Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and other prophets – who spoke to the people of Israel on God's behalf; and
- Paul, Peter, John and other leaders of the early church – who spoke to various groups and wrote letters to believers.

Much care has been taken in order to correctly interpret the verses. Nevertheless, if you encounter a verse that is used to teach something that is contrary to or goes beyond your understanding, assess its use by doing such things as: reading the passage it is from; and considering how its teaching fits in with Scripture as a whole (e.g. interpret OT teaching in the light of NT teaching).

For more information on *The Bible Unpacked* and free downloads, go to the website: www.thebibleunpacked.net

Suggestions for Study Groups

Preliminary matters:

- Beforehand the leader should: check the context of any verses they are not familiar with; and review the questions. If need be, they should compose questions more applicable to the group.
- Each person should have a Bible, for things such as checking a verse's context. It would also be helpful to have Bible commentaries on hand.
- Pray before beginning the study. Ask God for help in understanding the meaning of the verses and to affect your lives through them. Also pray together at the end.

Doing the study:

- Ideally, read the material and answer the questions prior to the meeting. Then share answers and discuss any issues arising from the material in the meeting.
- Alternatively, read the material and answer the questions in the meeting – reading either aloud as a group or individually (prior to sharing answers). If reading as a group, **try having one person read the headings, another read the verses and another read the comments.** Additionally, a fourth person could read the Bible references.
- Answers need not be limited to only what is mentioned in the material.
- The group should feel free to diverge from the study if related issues arise.

General or concluding questions:

If time permits, conclude with one or more of the following questions:

- What is something that you either: **did not know** before; gained **greater insight** into; or **needed reminding** of?
- What verse would be helpful to memorize and bear in mind during the next week?
- In taking the verses seriously, is there anything you should change in:
 - (a) how you relate to God or to other people; or
 - (b) any other area of your life (e.g. attitudes, values or behavior)?

If so, are there any specific steps you could take to do this?

I. God's Saving of His People

(⇒ 13. *Salvation through Jesus Christ*)

God has the capacity to save his people always – no matter what the circumstances. Thus God can save his people from all things – and ultimately he does. The Bible contains both numerous examples of God saving his people and promises of him continuing to do so.

In reading this chapter about God's saving and preservation of his people, one should bear in mind that the Bible also speaks of God's people experiencing sufferings common to all people (cf. 39. *Hard Times*); and also persecution for their faith (cf. 40. *Persecution*). God can and does save and preserve his people, but also does allow or even ordain difficult experiences for his people – often for reasons that may not be clear.

Promises given in the OT of God saving and preserving his people are still very much relevant under the new covenant – as is reflected in a number of NT passages. But they are more applicable in a spiritual sense – in keeping with the greater

spiritual nature of the second covenant in contrast to the often more tangible aspects of the first covenant. As such we should bear in mind C. H. Spurgeon's words: "It is impossible that any ill should happen to the man who is beloved of the Lord...Ill to him is no ill, but only good in a mysterious form. Losses enrich him, sickness is his medicine, reproach his honor, death is his gain". (See also the introductory comment under *God saves them out of all troubles*, p. 5.)

a) God's Capacity to Save His People

God is able to save his people – no matter what the odds

DAN 3:17 [SHADRACH, MESHACH AND ABEDNEGO TO KING NEBUCHADNEZZAR:] *If you throw us into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from the furnace. He will save us from your power, O king.* NCV™

1SAM 14:6B *Nothing can prevent the LORD from delivering, whether by many or by a few.*

God has mighty power to save his people . . .

ZEPH 3:17A The LORD your God is with you; *the mighty One will save you.* NCV™

ACTS 13:17B Then *with his mighty power he led them out* [of captivity in Egypt], . . . CEV

. . . and so God can perform awesome deeds to save them

DEUT 26:8 [MOSES, TO THE ISRAELITES:] Therefore *the LORD brought us out of Egypt with tremendous strength and power, as well as with great awe–inspiring signs and wonders.*

DAN 6:27 [KING DARIUS, SPEAKING OF GOD:] *He delivers and rescues; he works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, he who has saved Daniel from the power of the lions.* ESV

The implication is that God can perform “signs and wonders” in delivering people, as he did in saving Daniel.

God does not need to use any other means but himself to save his people

HOS 1:7 [GOD:] But I will show pity to the people of Judah. *I will save them, but not by using bows or swords, horses or horsemen, or weapons of war. I, the LORD their God, will save them.* NCV™

Here God speaks of saving his people by no other power but himself.

Note: Salvation belongs to God – for he is the only savior**JONAH 2:9** *Salvation belongs to the LORD!***ISA 43:11** I, I am the LORD, and *besides me there is no savior.* ESV

In saying that salvation belongs to God and that he is the only savior, the Bible implies that though salvation or deliverance from trouble may take different forms, ultimately God is behind it.

Does God still perform awesome deeds to save people today? Do you know of any?

What does the fact that God does not need to use any other means but himself to save mean for his people?

How should believing that God is always able to save, affect the way we act and think?

b) God Saves His People – from All Things

God is the Savior of his people

Ps 25:5 [DAVID, TO GOD:] Guide me in your truth, and teach me, *my God, my Savior*. I trust you all day long. NCV™

God saves them out of all troubles

Ps 34:4–6, 17, 19 [DAVID:] I sought the LORD'S help and he answered me; *he delivered me from all my fears*. ⁵Those who look to him for help are happy; their faces are not ashamed. ⁶This oppressed man cried out and the LORD heard; *he saved him from all his troubles*. ... ¹⁷The godly cry out and the LORD hears; *he saves them from all their troubles*. ... ¹⁹*The godly face many dangers, but the LORD saves them from each one of them*.

2TIM 4:17–18 [PAUL:] However, the Lord stood by me and gave me strength so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the gentiles could hear it. *I was rescued out of a lion's mouth*. ¹⁸*The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will take me safely to his heavenly kingdom*. Glory belongs to him forever and ever! Amen. ISV

Christ had rescued Paul from physical danger (v. 17) – in fact he had done so many times (cf. 3:11). However in light of vv. 6–8 which indicate that Paul's death was near, it appears that in v. 18 Paul is not this time referring to a physical rescue but a spiritual one – where the Lord would bring him “safely to his heavenly kingdom”.

God saves his people from all their enemies

2KI 17:39 Instead you [the Israelites] must worship the LORD your God; then *he will rescue you from the power of all your enemies*.

2CHR 32:22 *The LORD delivered Hezekiah and the residents of Jerusalem from the power of King Sennacherib of Assyria and from all the other nations. He made them secure on every side.*

On delivering them, God may even honor his people

Ps 91:15 [GOD, SPEAKING OF ONE WHO LOVES HIM:] When he calls out to me, I will answer him. I will be with him when he is in trouble; *I will rescue him and bring him honor.*

Note: God is the light of his people, giving them light . . .

Ps 27:1A [DAVID:] *The LORD is my light and my salvation.* GW

Ps 118:27A *The LORD is our God, and he has given us light!* CEV

OT verses that speak of God giving light to his people generally use “light” to represent that which extends from God’s favor, such as salvation and well-being (cf. *NIV Study Bible*). By such things, metaphorically speaking the darkness of one’s circumstances is turned to light.

. . . God gives them light even in the midst of darkness

JOB 29:3 [JOB:] *God’s lamp shined on my head, and I walked through darkness by his light.* NCV™

MIC 7:8 [ISRAEL:] My enemies, do not gloat over me! Though I have fallen, I will get up. *Though I sit in darkness, the LORD will be my light.*

Even with all the wonderful promises in the Bible, dreadful things still happen to some of God's people. Why do you think this is so?

In what way are promises made under the Old Covenant that God would rescue Israel from all her enemies (cf. 2Ki 17:39) applicable to Christians today?

Is there any "darkness" in your life for which you experience or need God's "light"? How do we access God's "light"?

c) God Redeems His People

(➔ *Jesus Christ's Death and Redemption from Sin*, in 13. *Salvation through Jesus Christ*)

God redeems his people from adversity in that he rescues them and sets them free from it.

God is the Redeemer of his people . . .

ISA 47:4 [ISRAEL:] *Our Redeemer—the LORD of hosts is his name—is the Holy One of Israel.* ESV

. . . Thus, God redeems his people

Ps 34:22 *The LORD redeems the lives of his servants; and none of those who trust in him will be held guilty.* ISV

ISA 43:1 But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: “Fear not, for *I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.* ESV

God redeems his people from enemies

JER 31:11 *For the LORD has ransomed Jacob and has redeemed him from hands too strong for him.* ESV

God sets them free from suffering and things that imprison

LUKE 13:10–13 Now he [Jesus] was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath, ¹¹and a woman was there who had been disabled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten herself up completely. ¹²When Jesus saw her, he called her to him and said, “*Woman, you are freed from your infirmity.*” ¹³*Then he placed his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God.*

Ps 116:16 [A PSALMIST, TO GOD:] LORD, I am your servant; I am your servant and the son of your female servant. *You have freed me from my chains.* NCV™

God will redeem his people from death

Hos 13:14A [God:] *From the power of Sheol I will rescue them, from death I will redeem them.* O death, where are your plagues? O Sheol, where is your destruction? ISV

Note: God vindicates his people

Ps 135:14 *For the LORD vindicates his people,* and has compassion on his servants.

To vindicate someone is to clear them from blame; one could say it means to free or redeem from blame.

Is there anything that you need God to set you free from? What can you do to receive his help?

What does “redeem” mean? And in what way/s does God redeem his people?

What is the connection between “ransomed” and “redeemed” (Jer 31:11) – and how are they seen in Jesus Christ’s work?

d) God Helps His People against Enemies

God helps his people in need, including against enemies . . .

Ps 121:1–2 [A PSALMIST:] I look up toward the hills. *From where does my help come? ²My help comes from the LORD, the Creator of heaven and earth!*

Help against enemies would appear to be at least partially in view here (cf. v. 7).

. . . God consistently helps his people

Ps 46:1 God is our refuge and strength, *an ever-present help in times of trouble.* GW

ACTS 26:22A [PAUL:] *I have experienced help from God to this day ...*

God helps his people by delivering them from enemies . . .

Ps 37:40 *The LORD helps them and rescues them; he rescues them from evil men and delivers them,* for they seek his protection.

HEB 13:6 So we can say with confidence, *“The Lord is my helper, and I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?”*

. . . and God helps his people defeat enemies

Ps 118:7 *The LORD is with me to help me, so I will see my enemies defeated.* NCV™

For God fights for his people, giving victory over enemies

2CHR 20:15, 17, 22, 29 He [Jahaziel, a Levite] said: “Pay attention, all you people of Judah, residents of Jerusalem, and King Jehoshaphat! This is what the LORD says to you: ‘Don’t be afraid and don’t panic because of this huge army! *For the battle is not yours, but God’s.* . . . ¹⁷*You will not fight in this battle. Take your positions, stand, and watch the LORD deliver you,* O Judah and Jerusalem. Don’t be afraid and don’t panic! Tomorrow march out toward them; the LORD is with you!’” . . . ²²When they began to shout and praise, *the LORD suddenly attacked the Ammonites, Moabites, and men from Mount Seir who*

were invading Judah, and they were defeated. ... ²⁹All the kingdoms of the surrounding lands were afraid of God when they heard how *the LORD had fought against Israel's enemies.*

God enables his people to overcome all that is in the world . . .

ROM 8:31, 35, 37 [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] What then shall we say about these things? *If God is for us, who can be against us? ...* ³⁵*Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will trouble, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ...* ³⁷*No, in all these things we have complete victory through him who loved us!*

Verse 31b implies that if God is for us then no one can effectively oppose us. In all adversity we have complete victory through Christ (v. 37).

. . . As such, God enables his people to overcome Satan

1JN 2:14B [JOHN, TO BELIEVERS:] I have written to you, young people, that you are strong, and *the word of God resides in you, and you have conquered the evil one.*

The reference to the word of God living in these believers implies that it played a significant role in them overcoming Satan. As such this points to God enabling his people to overcome Satan.

What troubles with adversaries have you had in which God has helped you?

In what sense are battles confronting us not ours, but God's (cf. 2Chr 20:15)?

What "victory" is Paul speaking of in Rom 8:37. How is it applicable in your life?

e) God Is Revealed in Saving His People

(⇒ *God's Judgment Reveals God, in 10. God's Judgment*)

God's saving of his people makes known his salvation to the nations

ISA 52:9–10 Break out into shouts of joy, ruins of Jerusalem. *The LORD will comfort his people. He will reclaim Jerusalem.* ¹⁰*The LORD will show his holy power to all the nations. All the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God.* GW

This speaks of future deliverance for Jerusalem, in which God would demonstrate his holy power, causing all nations to see his salvation (v. 10).

God's saving of his people makes known that he is the only God

DEUT 4:34–35 [MOSES, TO THE ISRAELITES:] *Or has any god ever tried to come and take one nation away from another for himself? The LORD your God used his mighty hand and powerful arm to do this for you in Egypt. He did this using plagues, miraculous signs, amazing things, and war. He did his great and awe-inspiring deeds in front of you.* ³⁵*You were shown these things so that you would know that the LORD is God. There is no other god.* GW

God's saving of his people reveals God's great power

PS 106:8 *Yet he delivered them for the sake of his reputation, that he might reveal his power.*

This refers to God delivering Israel from the Egyptians.

God's saving of his people reveals God's glory

ISA 44:23B The LORD saved the people of Jacob! *He showed his glory when he saved Israel.* NCV™

God's saving of his people evidences God's love and faithfulness

Ps 57:3 [DAVID:] *He will answer from heaven and save me; he will defeat my oppressors. God will show me his constant love and faithfulness.* GNT

God's saving of his people shows God's holiness and righteousness

EZEK 28:25 This is what the Lord God says: *I will gather the people of Israel from the nations where they are scattered. I will show my holiness when the nations see what I do for my people. Then they will live in their own land—the land I gave to my servant Jacob.* NCV™

Ps 98:2 *The LORD has made known his salvation; he has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the nations.* ESV

In what way/s has God revealed himself that you are aware of?

What is the “glory” of God spoken of in Isa 44:23b (in *God's saving of his people reveals God's glory*)? And how was it shown by God saving Israel?

What evidence have you seen of God's “constant love and faithfulness” (Ps 57:3)?

II. God's Preservation of His People

As with verses which speak of God's saving of his people, verses which speak of God's preservation of his people are amongst the best-loved verses in the Bible. They contain some of the Bible's great promises, which reassure us when we wonder if God has "lost our address". As such they provide good reason for God's people to trust in him and be at peace.

a) God Meets His People's Needs

Note that the first subsection below points to the overall theme of this chapter. As such it is reflected in and pertinent to the whole chapter, not just this section.

God cares for his people

ZEC 10:3B *The LORD of Armies takes care of his flock, the people of Judah. He makes them like his splendid war horse.* CEV

1PET 5:6–7 [PETER, TO BELIEVERS:] And God will exalt you in due time, if you humble yourselves under his mighty hand ⁷by casting all your cares on him because *he cares for you*.

God sustains his people

Ps 3:5 [DAVID:] I lay down and slept; I woke again, for *the LORD sustained me*. ESV

God meets his people's physical needs

PROV 10:3 *The LORD does not let the righteous go hungry, but he thwarts the craving of the wicked.* ESV

1TIM 6:17 [PAUL, INSTRUCTING TIMOTHY WHAT TO TEACH BELIEVERS:] As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on *God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy*. ESV

It can be inferred from the final clause that God provides us with everything we need (cf. CEV, NLT), with physical needs being primarily in view here.

God meets their physical needs even in harsh circumstances

NEH 9:21 [LEVITES, TO GOD:] *For forty years you sustained them. Even in the desert they never lacked anything. Their clothes did not wear out and their feet did not swell.*

Ps 23:5 [DAVID, TO GOD:] *You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.* ESV

Even amidst adversaries, God provided for David – as implied by “prepare a table [feast] before me” and “my cup overflows”.

God satisfies his people's spiritual hunger and thirst

MATT 5:6 *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.*

JOHN 6:35 Jesus said to them, “*I am the bread of life. The one who comes to me will never go hungry, and the one who believes in me will never be thirsty.*”

In fact, God provides for all their needs – they will not lack anything

PHIL 4:19 [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS WHO HAD SUPPORTED HIM:] *And my God will supply your every need according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.*

LUKE 22:35 Then Jesus said to them [his disciples], “*When I sent you out with no money bag, or traveler's bag, or sandals, you didn't lack anything, did you?*” They replied, “*Nothing.*”

Note: God is his people's portion

Ps 73:25–26 [A PSALMIST, TO GOD:] *Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. ²⁶My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.* ESV

The question (v. 25a) implies that not only did the psalmist not have anyone nor anything else in heaven, he also did not long for such. In saying that God was his “portion forever” (v. 26) the psalmist appears to mean that God was all he would ever need (cf. GNT) or desire (cf. v. 25b).

How does God provide for you? How do you respond to this?

What does it mean to “hunger and thirst for righteousness” (Matt 5:6)?
How is such hunger and thirst satisfied?

Do you lack anything you need – physical or spiritual? If so, what can
you do about it?

b) God Strengthens His People

(⇒ *God Works through His People (II): Empowerment*, in 20. *God's Plans for His People*)

God is the strength of his people

Ps 28:7–8 [DAVID:] *The LORD is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts, and I am helped; my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to him. ⁸The LORD is the strength of his people; he is the saving refuge of his anointed.* ESV

As such, God supports and upholds his people . . .

Ps 94:18 [A PSALMIST, TO GOD:] If I say, “My foot is slipping,” *your loyal love, O LORD, supports me.*

Ps 37:23–24 The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, And He delights in his way. ²⁴*Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; For the LORD upholds him with His hand.* NKJV

. . . God even carries them

Isa 46:3–4 [GOD:] Family of Jacob, listen to me! All you people from Israel who are still alive, listen! *I have carried you since you were born; I have taken care of you from your birth. ⁴Even when you are old, I will be the same. Even when your hair has turned gray, I will take care of you. I made you and will take care of you. I will carry you and save you.* NCV™

In supporting and upholding his people, God is at times figuratively spoken of as carrying them.

God in fact strengthens his people

EPH 3:16 [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] *I pray that according to the wealth of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner person, . . .*

PHIL 4:13 [PAUL, REFERRING TO CHRIST:] *I can do all things through him who strengthens me.* ESV

God strengthens his people when they are weak . . .

ISA 40:30–31 *Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; ³¹but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.* ESV

. . . God restores and renews them

1PET 5:10 [PETER, TO BELIEVERS:] *After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you in the Messiah Jesus to his eternal glory, will restore you, establish you, strengthen you, and support you.* ISV

2COR 4:16 [PAUL:] *Therefore we do not despair, but even if our physical body is wearing away, our inner person is being renewed day by day.*

God strengthens them in the face of adversity

PS 18:39 [DAVID, TO GOD:] *You give me strength for battle; you make my foes kneel before me.*

2TIM 4:16–17 [PAUL:] *At my first defense no one appeared in my support; instead they all deserted me – may they not be held accountable for it. ¹⁷But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message would be fully proclaimed for all the Gentiles to hear. And so I was delivered from the lion’s mouth!*

Note that in Paul’s letters “Lord” is generally understood to be a reference to Jesus Christ.

God strengthens them spiritually, until Jesus Christ’s return

COL 1:11 [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] *You are being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might, so that you might patiently endure everything with joy . . .* ISV

1COR 1:8 [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] *He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

God encourages his people

2THES 2:16–17 [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by grace gave us eternal comfort and good hope, ¹⁷*encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good thing you do or say.*

God heals his people

Ps 30:2 [DAVID:] *O LORD my God, I cried out to you and you healed me.*

JAMES 5:14–16 [JAMES, TO BELIEVERS:] Is anyone among you ill? He should summon the elders of the church, and they should pray for him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵*And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick and the Lord will raise him up – and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.* ¹⁶*So confess your sins to one another and pray for one another so that you may be healed.* The prayer of a righteous person has great effectiveness.

The topic of healing is a somewhat controversial one. Does God promise to heal all illness, if we have faith that he will? This passage and Psalms 103:3 support the affirmative. 2 Corinthians 12:7–9 and the fact that numerous people of faith have remained ill after repeated prayer, suggest otherwise. However we do know that God wants his people to take all such needs to him in prayer, in assurance that he will hear and act for one's ultimate good and in line with his will.

In what ways does God strengthen his people?

Do Christians need to do anything in order to be “strengthened with all power according to his glorious might” (Col 1:11)? If so what?

How does God encourage his people?

c) God Protects His People (I): General

God protects his people

JOSH 24:17B [JOSHUA, TO THE ISRAELITES:] *He continually protected us as we traveled and when we passed through nations.*

Ps 32:7 [DAVID, TO GOD:] *You are my hiding place; you protect me from distress. You surround me with shouts of joy from those celebrating deliverance. (Selah)*

God protects his people from enemies

Ps 31:20 *You are their shelter from harmful plots, and you are their protection from vicious gossip. CEV*

Ps 91:14 The LORD says, "Because he is devoted to me, I will deliver him; *I will protect him because he is loyal to me.*

As such, God preserves his people's lives . . .

Ps 138:7 [DAVID, TO GOD:] *Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life; you stretch out your hand against the wrath of my enemies, and your right hand delivers me. ESV*

. . . and God keeps his people safe and secure

Ps 16:8–9 [DAVID:] *I have set the LORD always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken. ⁹Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure. ESV*

God protects his people from Satan and all evil

2THES 3:3 [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] *But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one.*

Ps 23:4 [DAVID, TO GOD:] *Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. ESV*

God and Jesus Christ keep their people as their own – until the end

JOHN 6:39 [JESUS:] *Now this is the will of the one who sent me – that I should not lose one person of every one he has given me, but raise them all up at the last day.*

JOHN 10:28–29 [JESUS:] I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and *no one will snatch them out of my hand.* ²⁹My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and *no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.* ESV

God and Jesus Christ keep their people as their own, in a right relationship with them. In doing so they shield their people from spiritual harm throughout their lives, bringing their salvation to fruition at the end of the age.

If the New Testament warns God's people that they will suffer persecution, how is Psalms 12:7 for example (in *God protects his people from enemies*) applicable to God's people today?

When facing trouble, how can we like David say: "...my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices..." (Ps 16:8-9)?

What assurance do we have that God will keep us – protecting us from being snatched away from him, or falling away from him?

d) God Protects His People (II): Depictions

God shields his people

Ps 33:20 [GODLY PEOPLE:] We wait on the LORD; *he is our help and our shield.* ISV

Ps 140:7 [DAVID, TO GOD:] O sovereign LORD, my strong deliverer, *you shield my head in the day of battle.*

God surrounds his people . . .

Ps 125:2 *As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the LORD surrounds his people, now and forevermore.*

Ps 34:7 *The LORD's angel camps around the LORD's loyal followers and delivers them.*

. . . and God is a refuge for them

2SAM 22:2–3 He [David] said, *“The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, ³my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold and my refuge, my savior; you save me from violence.* ESV

God guards his people . . .

Ps 121:4–8 *Look! The one who is guarding Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps. ⁵The LORD is your guardian; the LORD is your shade at your right side. ⁶The sun will not ravage you by day, nor the moon by night. ⁷The LORD will guard you from all evil, preserving your life. ⁸The LORD will guard your goings and comings, from this time on and forever.* ISV

Ps 91:11 *For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.* ESV

. . . and God watches over them

PROV 2:8 God sees that justice is done, and *he watches over everyone who is faithful to him.* CEV

God is a shepherd to his people . . .

Ps 23:1–4 [DAVID:] *The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing. ²He takes me to lush pastures, he leads me to refreshing water. ³He restores my strength. He leads me down the right paths for the sake of his reputation. ⁴Even when I must walk through the darkest valley, I fear no danger, for you are with me; your rod and your staff reassure me.*

In portraying God as a shepherd (and his people as sheep) the Bible points to how God protects, rescues, leads, provides and generally cares for his people. In conjunction with this, the analogy depicts his close relationship with his people.

. . . Likewise, Jesus Christ is a shepherd to them

JOHN 10:14–15 [JESUS:] *I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me –¹⁵just as the Father knows me and I know the Father – and I lay down my life for the sheep.*

Pick one of the depictions that you relate to and say how it encourages you.

Do angels camp around Christians and guard them (cf. Ps 34:7; 91:11)?

What is one area of your life in which your thoughts and feelings would be affected by keeping the teaching about God's protection in mind? To help you do this, choose a verse to learn.

e) Epilogue: God's Care of the Needy

Bear in mind that while many verses in the Bible assert that God looks after the needy, the Bible also speaks of the suffering of the needy. As such the Bible often speaks of God delivering the needy as opposed to keeping them from experiencing any troubles (just as it often speaks of God saving his people out of troubles as opposed to keeping them from experiencing any troubles, though the latter is also spoken of). Additionally, note that much of the teaching in this section is often interpreted as generality.

In considering the plight of the needy and God's response, we should also remember that the Bible often refers to God working through his people to achieve his purposes. One can infer from this that a good part of what God does to secure justice and protection for the needy – as spoken of in this section – he does through his people.

The needy are often mistreated by the wicked and made to suffer

JOB 20:19 For *he* [a wicked person] *has oppressed the poor and abandoned them; he has seized a house which he did not build.*

ECCL 4:1 [A WISE TEACHER:] *So I again considered all the oppression that continually occurs on earth. This is what I saw: The oppressed were in tears, but no one was comforting them; no one delivers them from the power of their oppressors.*

However, God rescues the needy . . .

PS 35:10 [DAVID:] With all my strength I will say, “O LORD, who can compare to you? *You rescue the oppressed from those who try to overpower them; the oppressed and needy from those who try to rob them.*

PS 109:31 [DAVID, SPEAKING OF GOD:] *For he stands at the right hand of the needy one, to save him from those who condemn his soul to death.* ESV

. . . and God secures justice for the needy

Ps 140:12 [DAVID:] *I know that the LORD will act on behalf of the tormented, providing justice for the needy.* ISV

God protects and is a refuge for the needy

Ps 12:5 “Because of the violence done to the oppressed, because of the painful cries of the needy, I will spring into action,” says the LORD. “*I will provide the safety they so desperately desire.*”

ISA 25:4A *You [God] have been a refuge for the poor, a refuge for the needy in their distress, a shelter from the rain, and shade from the heat.* GW

God provides for the needy

Ps 68:10B *Out of your goodness, O God, you provided for oppressed people.* GW

By drawing on these verses, what encouragement could you give a person in great need?

Who does the term the “oppressed...in tears” (Eccl 4:1) bring to your mind? What about oppressed Christian groups; which ones do you know of that face intense persecution?

What could you do to be “an instrument” of God in helping the needy and suffering – particularly those mentioned in your previous answer?

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Overview of *The Bible Unpacked*


There are seven editions of *The Bible Unpacked*, as shown below. Each edition is an abbreviated version of the next longest edition. As such they have similar structures. Four of the editions have studies based on them, with the same text along with questions. For more details and free downloads of all the material, go to www.thebibleunpacked.net.

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For giving to non-Christians.


 **Pocket Edition:** Key Bible teachings for seekers of truth
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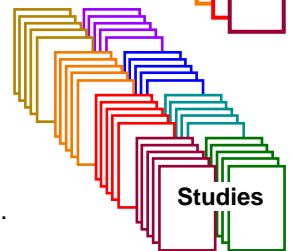
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An Appeal on Behalf of Persecuted Christians

Over 200 million Christians in at least 60 countries are denied basic human rights solely because of their faith. (Source: World Evangelical Alliance) Every year many Christians are killed because of their faith.

Through prayer, encouragement and practical assistance we can assist and fellowship with persecuted Christians in their suffering. You can play a vital part in this through contacting one of the organizations listed below. Most produce regular news/prayer letters.

Barnabas Fund – www.barnabasfund.org

It provides material and spiritual support in response to needs identified by local Christian leaders.

Christian Faith and Freedom – www.cffreedom.org

It advocates on behalf of and aids persecuted Christians.

Christian Solidarity International – www.csi-int.org

CSI works to defend religious liberty and help persecuted Christians.

Christian Solidarity Worldwide – www.csw.org.uk

It advocates for freedom of religion and justice for persecuted believers.

Compass Direct – www.compassdirect.org

This is a Christian news service providing news, reports, interviews and analyses of situations facing persecuted Christians.

Open Doors – sb.od.org; www.opendoors.org.au

It provides Bibles and other Christian materials, to prepare believers for persecution and equip them to maintain a witness to the Gospel.

Religious Liberty Commission – www.worldevangelicals.org/commissions/rlc/; www.ea.org.au/ea-family/Religious-Liberty.aspx

RLC defends and aids persecuted Christians. See also www.idop.org
Receive weekly updates by sending a blank email to join-rlpb@hub.xc.org.

The Bible League – www.bibleleague.org/persecuted; www.bibleleague.com

It supplies Bibles to persecuted Christians and also provides training.

Voice of the Martyrs – www.persecution.com; www.persecution.com.au

VOM provides Bibles, literature, radio broadcasts and other assistance to help persecuted Christians spread the gospel. They also send material aid.

Then the King will answer, 'I tell you the truth, anything you did for even the least of my people here, you also did for me.' Matthew 25:40 NCV

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