

Part H. Persevering

The **Bible** Unpacked

Foundations Study Series

A compilation of the Bible's teaching
for believers consolidating their faith

paul mallison

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A compilation of the Bible's teaching
for believers consolidating their faith

Part H. Persevering

Composed by Paul Mallison

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Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| A Quick Word | iv |
| Suggestions for Study Groups..... | v |
| 36. Standing Firm | 1 |
| 37. Rejecting Sin | 7 |
| 38. Major Pitfalls | 13 |
| 39. Hard Times | 19 |
| 40. Persecution | 25 |
| Topics in This Series | 30 |
| Overview of <i>The Bible Unpacked</i> | 33 |

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 eight booklets in the series, based on the eight parts of the book *The Bible Unpacked - Foundations Edition*. Each booklet has five chapters, with questions added.

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.

For free downloads and information on other study series based on editions of *The Bible Unpacked*, go to: www.thebibleunpacked.net.

Paul Mallison

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.

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 and/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?

36. Standing Firm

| | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Be Faithful to God..... | 2 |
| Persist Till the End..... | 2 |
| Engaging in Spiritual Warfare | 3 |

The Bible contains numerous warnings and exhortations to be faithful to God and to hold to the Christian faith. It is a persistent challenge for every Christian to do so, until the end. This chapter provides important insights and instructions on this topic, for every believer.

Be Faithful to God

Be faithful to God and Jesus Christ

[SOLOMON, TO THE PEOPLE:] *May you, his people, always be faithful to the LORD our God, obeying all his laws and commands, as you do today.* 1 KINGS 8:61 GNT

When he arrived and saw how God had blessed the people, he was glad and *urged them all to be faithful and true to the Lord with all their hearts.* ACTS 11:23 GNT

Do not be unfaithful to God by not obeying his commands

So Saul died because *he was unfaithful to the LORD and did not obey the LORD's instructions ...* 1 CHRONICLES 10:13A NET

Do not forget God

[MOSES, TO THE ISRAELITES:] *Be sure you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping his commandments, ordinances, and statutes that I am giving you today. ...*¹⁸*You must remember the LORD your God ...* DEUTERONOMY 8:11, 18A NET

Keep thinking about God's word

[A PSALMIST, TO GOD:] *Oh, how I love your teachings! They are in my thoughts all day long. ...*¹⁴⁸*My eyes are wide-open throughout the nighttime hours to reflect on your word.* PSALMS 119:97, 148 GW

Persist Till the End

Continue following Jesus Christ's teaching

So Jesus said to the Jews who believed in him, *“If you continue to obey my teaching, you are truly my followers.* JOHN 8:31 NCV™

Stand firm till the end

[JESUS, TO HIS DISCIPLES:] *All people will hate you because you follow me, but those people who keep their faith until the end will be saved.* MATTHEW 10:22 NCV™

Persist so that you will receive the reward

So do not throw away your confidence, because it has great reward.
³⁶For you need endurance in order to do God's will and so receive what is promised. HEBREWS 10:35–36 NET

As you do not know when Jesus Christ will return, keep watch and be ready

“So keep on watching, because you don't know on what day your Lord is coming. ⁴³But be sure of this: if the owner of the house had known when during the night the thief would be coming, he would have stayed awake and not allowed his house to be broken into. ⁴⁴So you, too, must be ready, because at an hour you are not expecting him the Son of Man will come.” MATTHEW 24:42–44 ISV

Engaging in Spiritual Warfare

Believers are involved in a spiritual warfare. They are faced with challenges from spiritual enemies – notably Satan – and also from within themselves.

Resist Satan

Be on your guard and stay awake. *Your enemy, the devil, is like a roaring lion, sneaking around to find someone to attack.* ⁹But you must resist the devil and stay strong in your faith. 1 PETER 5:8–9 CEV

Use spiritual weapons and armor

For this reason, *take up the full armor of God so that you may be able to stand your ground on the evil day, and having done everything, to stand.* ¹⁴Stand firm therefore, by fastening the belt of truth around your waist, by putting on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵by fitting your feet with the preparation that comes from the good news of peace, ... EPHESIANS 6:13–15 NET

Verse 15 is most likely speaking of believers having a strong grasp of the truths of the gospel so as to be ready for action. Possibly a readiness to proclaim this gospel is in view. (Note that other spiritual weapons follow.)

Have Faith

At all times carry faith as a shield; for with it you will be able to put out all the burning arrows shot by the Evil One. EPHESIANS 6:16 GNT

Use God's word

Accept God's salvation as your helmet, and *take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.* EPHESIANS 6:17 NCV™

The description of God's word as "the sword of the Spirit" reflects its: power; attacking and defensive roles; spiritual nature; and importance to the work of the Holy Spirit.

Pray

Never stop praying, especially for others. Always pray by the power of the Spirit. Stay alert and keep praying for God's people.

EPHESIANS 6:18 CEV

In the face of evil (cf. vv. 11, 13), believers should keep on praying – not just for themselves but for all God's people.

What challenges do you face in remaining faithful to God? What advice could you give to someone facing similar challenges?

What could you do in order to more persistently meditate on God's word?

Are you ready for Jesus Christ's return? If you knew he was returning in the next twelve months, what would you do differently?

Some people worry a lot about Satan, while others are not concerned at all. How should we view him?

Choose one of the things mentioned in the spiritual weapons and armor listed and say how it does or could help you in spiritual warfare.

37. Rejecting Sin

| | |
|--------------------------|----|
| Dealing with Sin..... | 8 |
| Avoiding Sin..... | 8 |
| Alternatives to Sin..... | 9 |
| Be Holy..... | 10 |

The Bible does not merely tell us not to sin. As this chapter shows, the Bible gives practical instruction on how to deal with any sin that we have done – and also on how to avoid sin in future.

Dealing with Sin

Be sorrowful over your sin

The sacrifice God wants is a broken spirit. God, you will not reject a heart that is broken and sorry for sin. PSALMS 51:17 NCV™

A “broken” spirit or heart is one that is deeply sorry.

Confess your sin to God

[NEHEMIAH, TO GOD:] *I confess the sins that we Israelites have committed against you as well as the sins that my father’s family and I have committed. ⁷We have done you a great wrong. We haven’t obeyed the commandments, laws, or regulations that you gave us through your servant Moses.* NEHEMIAH 1:6B–7 GW

Ask God for forgiveness and restoration

[DAVID, TO GOD AFTER COMMITTING TERRIBLE SIN:] *God, be merciful to me because you are loving. Because you are always ready to be merciful, wipe out all my wrongs. ... ⁷Take away my sin, and I will be clean. Wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. ⁸Make me hear sounds of joy and gladness; let the bones you crushed be happy again. ⁹Turn your face from my sins and wipe out all my guilt. ¹⁰Create in me a pure heart, God, and make my spirit right again.* PSALMS 51:1, 7–10 NCV™

Avoiding Sin

Ask God for help to avoid sin

[DAVID, TO GOD:] *Don’t let me do wrong on purpose, Lord, or let sin have control over my life. Then I will be innocent, and not guilty of some terrible fault.* PSALMS 19:13 CEV

For God will help us withstand temptation

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] *You are tempted in the same way that everyone else is tempted. But God can be trusted not to let you be tempted too much, and he will show you how to escape from your temptations.* 1 CORINTHIANS 10:13 CEV

Use God's word to avoid sin

[A PSALMIST, TO GOD:] *Young people can live a clean life by obeying your word. ... ¹¹I treasure your word above all else; it keeps me from sinning against you.* PSALMS 119:9, 11 CEV

Avoid sinful desires

[PETER, TO BELIEVERS:] Dear friends, I urge you as foreigners and exiles to *keep away from fleshly desires that do battle against the soul, ...* 1 PETER 2:11 NET

Alternatives to Sin

Instead of living by sinful human nature, live by the Holy Spirit

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] He [God] condemned sin in the flesh ⁴so that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who *do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.* ⁵For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit ROMANS 8:3B–5 ISV

Our human nature (“the flesh”) is basically sinful. But God has given his Holy Spirit to believers. As such, we are to live by God’s Holy Spirit. This involves paying attention to the Spirit’s promptings and relying on his power. In conjunction with this, our minds should be focused on “things of the Spirit” (v. 5).

Instead of living as a slave to sin, live as a slave to God

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] *At one time you surrendered yourselves entirely as slaves to impurity and wickedness for wicked purposes. In the same way you must now surrender yourselves entirely as slaves of righteousness for holy purposes. ... ²²But now you have been set free from sin and are the slaves of God. Your gain is a life fully dedicated to him,* and the result is eternal life. ROMANS 6:19B, 22 GNT

One of the most effective measures against sinning is to be busy doing good – as is the case when one lives as a slave to righteousness and God.

Be Holy

We are to be holy, as God is holy

[PETER, TO BELIEVERS:] As obedient children, do not be shaped by the desires that you once had in your ignorance. ¹⁵Instead, *just as the one who called you is holy, be holy in every aspect of your life.* ¹⁶*For it is written, “You must be holy, because I am holy.”* 1 PETER 1:14–16 ISV

If we are to be God’s people, acceptable to him, we need to be holy because: God is holy and so does not accept anything that is not holy. Therefore we should keep trying to be holy, like God.

Be set apart for God

[GOD, TO THE ISRAELITES:] Therefore *separate yourselves and be holy, because I am the Lord your God.* LEVITICUS 20:7 ISV

The lambs were eaten by the Israelites who had returned from exile and by *all who had separated themselves from the unclean practices of the non-Jews in the land to worship the LORD God of Israel.* EZRA 6:21 GW

What should we do about sin that we have committed?

How does God's word help us to avoid sin?

Explain in your own words what it means to "live according to the Spirit" (cf. Romans 8:3b-5)?

How does being preoccupied with doing what is right - including doing good deeds - help us to avoid sin? What right or good things could you be more focused on doing?

What is involved in being holy?

38. Major Pitfalls

| | |
|-----------------------------|----|
| Pride | 14 |
| Consequences of Pride | 15 |
| Riches | 15 |
| Sexual Sin | 16 |

The “pitfalls” spoken of in this chapter are: pride, riches and sexual sin. These are three of the greatest dangers to one’s life as a believer. It is essential that we take to heart the Bible’s teaching about them.

Pride

Do not be proud or conceited

Don't be proud and feel that you are smarter than others. Make friends with ordinary people. ROMANS 12:16B CEV

Do not be wise in your own eyes

How horrible it will be for those who think they are wise and consider themselves to be clever. ISAIAH 5:21 GOD'S WORD®

Do not be self-righteous

Jesus also told this parable to some who were confident that they were righteous and looked down on everyone else. ^{10c}Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹*The Pharisee stood and prayed about himself like this: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people: extortionists, unrighteous people, adulterers — or even like this tax collector.* ¹²*I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of everything I get.'* ¹³The tax collector, however, stood far off and would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, be merciful to me, sinner that I am!' ¹⁴*I tell you that this man went down to his home justified rather than the Pharisee. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.'* LUKE 18:9–14 NET

To be self-righteous is to be sure that you are innocent of wrongdoing in contrast to other people. Such people are not “justified” (v. 14) – i.e. forgiven and made right in God's sight.

Instead of being proud, be humble

[PETER, TO BELIEVERS:] *And all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.* 1 PETER 5:5B NET

No, the LORD has told us what is good. What he requires of us is this: to do what is just, to show constant love, and to *live in humble fellowship with our God.* MICAH 6:8B GNT

Consequences of Pride

Pride is very detrimental to a relationship with God

[MOSES, TO THE ISRAELITES:] ... *make sure that you do not become proud and forget the LORD your God who rescued you from Egypt, where you were slaves.* DEUTERONOMY 8:14 GNT

[A PSALMIST, TO GOD:] *The wicked are too proud to turn to you or even think about you.* PSALMS 10:4 CEV

Pride leads to one's downfall – in contrast to humility

Pride leads to destruction; humility leads to honor. PROVERBS 18:12 CEV

Riches

Riches are a barrier to a relationship with God

Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “*How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!*” ... ²⁵*It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.*” MARK 10:23, 25 NET

Riches are not secure

Tell those who have the riches of this world ... *not to place their confidence in anything as uncertain as riches..* 1 TIMOTHY 6:17A
GOD'S WORD®

Hoarding riches will bring ill consequences in the afterlife

[JESUS:] *But how horrible it will be for those who are rich. They have had their comfort.* LUKE 6:24 GW

So, do not love money and be content with what you have

Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be satisfied with what you have. For God has said, “I will never leave you; I will never abandon you.” HEBREWS 13:5 GNT

Sexual Sin

Avoid sexual sin

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] *But there must be no sexual sin among you, or any kind of evil or greed. Those things are not right for God's holy people.* EPHESIANS 5:3 NCV™

The Pharisees and the teachers of the Law of Moses brought in a woman who had been caught in bed with a man who wasn't her husband. They made her stand in the middle of the crowd. ⁴Then they said, "Teacher, this woman was caught sleeping with a man who isn't her husband. ... ⁷They kept on asking Jesus about the woman. Finally, he stood up and said, "If any of you have never sinned, then go ahead and throw the first stone at her!" ⁸Once again he bent over and began writing on the ground. ⁹The people left one by one, beginning with the oldest. Finally, Jesus and the woman were there alone. ¹⁰Jesus stood up and asked her, "Where is everyone? Isn't there anyone left to accuse you?" ¹¹"No sir," the woman answered. Then Jesus told her, "I am not going to accuse you either. *You may go now, but don't sin anymore.*" JOHN 8:3–4, 7–11 CEV

Sexual sin results in God's judgment

[GOD, TO JOHN:] But I will tell you what will happen to cowards and to everyone who is unfaithful or dirty-minded or who murders *or is sexually immoral* or uses witchcraft or worships idols or tells lies. *They will be thrown into that lake of fire and burning sulfur. This is the second death.* REVELATION 21:8 CEV

Why is pride so bad?

What is “self-righteousness”? How can we avoid it?

How does one “be humble”? What attitudes and actions does it involve?

How do riches form a barrier to our relationship with God?

In what ways is sexual sin detrimental to oneself?

39. Hard Times

| | |
|------------------------------|----|
| Grieve over Loss | 20 |
| Trust and Wait For God | 20 |
| Pray in Hard Times | 21 |
| God in Our Hard Times..... | 22 |

Hard times are experienced by all Christians. This reality is reflected in the Bible. But the Bible also shows that there are a number of practical and effective things that we can do when undergoing hard times – the most prominent of which is praying.

Grieve over Loss

Grieve over loss – particularly deaths

Now when Mary came to the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said to him, “Lord, if you had been here, *my brother would not have died.*”³³ *When Jesus saw her weeping, and the people who had come with her weeping, he was intensely moved in spirit and greatly distressed.*³⁴ He asked, “Where have you laid him?” They replied, “Lord, come and see.”³⁵ *Jesus wept.* JOHN 11:32–35 NET

Grieve before God

The Benjaminites again attacked them from Gibeah and struck down eighteen thousand sword-wielding Israelite soldiers.²⁶ So all the Israelites, the whole army, went up to Bethel. *They wept and sat there before the LORD*; they did not eat anything that day until evening.

JUDGES 20:25–26A NET

Trust and Wait For God

Trust in God

[DAVID, TO GOD:] I have heard the slander of many; It is like terror all around me, as they conspire together and plot to take my life.¹⁴ *But I trust in you, O LORD. I say, “You are my God.”*¹⁵ *My times are in your hands. Deliver me from the hands of my enemies and from those who pursue me.* PSALMS 31:13–15 ISV

The statement: “You are my God” (v. 14), implies that the LORD is the one David trusts as being in control of his life, the one who held his present and future circumstances in his hands (v. 15a).

Take refuge in God

*The one who lives in the shelter of the Most High and who abides in the shadow of the Almighty*² *will say to the LORD, “You are my refuge, my fortress, and my God in whom I trust!”* PSALMS 91:1–2 ISV

Wait for God

Wait patiently for the LORD! Wait confidently for him! PSALMS 37:7A NET

Take comfort in God's word

[A PSALMIST, TO GOD:] *When I suffer, this comforts me: Your promise gives me life. ...* ⁵²*I remember your laws from long ago, and they comfort me, LORD.* PSALMS 119:50, 52 NCV™

In v. 50 the psalmist speaks of God's promise renewing his life, through the hope that it gives.

Pray in Hard Times

Pour out your heart to God

O people, in every situation put your trust in him; *pour out your heart before him*; for God is a refuge for us. PSALMS 62:8 ISV

To pour out your heart to God involves telling God about all your concerns and feelings – “emptying” your heart before him.

Cry out to God for help

[DAVID:] *In my distress I called to the LORD; I cried out to my God.* From his heavenly temple he heard my voice; *he listened to my cry for help.* PSALMS 18:6 NET

Persist in prayer to God

[A PSALMIST, TO GOD:] *LORD God, my saviour, I cry out all day, and at night I come before you.* PSALMS 88:1 GNT

Praise and thank God amidst trouble

Then [Jehoshaphat] *he chose men to be singers to the LORD, to praise him because he is holy and wonderful. As they marched in front of the army, they said, “Thank the LORD, because his love continues forever.”* ²²*As they began to sing and praise God, the LORD set ambushes for the people of Ammon, Moab, and Edom who had come to attack Judah. And they were defeated.* 2 CHRONICLES 20:21B–22 NCV™

God in Our Hard Times

God is near us in hard times

The LORD is close to the brokenhearted, and he saves those whose spirits have been crushed. PSALMS 34:18 NCV™

God comforts us in hard times

[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.* PSALMS 23:4 ESV

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! *He is the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort, ⁴who comforts us in all our suffering, so that we may be able to comfort others in all their suffering, since we ourselves are being comforted by God.* 2 CORINTHIANS 1:3–4 ISV

Testimony to God answering prayers in trouble

[DAVID:] *I sought the LORD's help and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears. ... ⁶This oppressed man cried out and the LORD heard; he saved him from all his troubles.* PSALMS 34:4, 6 NET

LORD, you have heard the request of the oppressed; you make them feel secure because you listen to their prayer. ¹⁸You defend the fatherless and oppressed, so that mere mortals may no longer terrorize them. PSALMS 10:17–18 NET

How do you think you would find it helpful to mourn over loss “before” God?

What is involved in trusting in God during hard times?

What is meant by “pour out your heart” to God (cf. Psalms 62:8)?
How does doing this help in suffering?

Apart from God’s response, how does persisting in prayer benefit a suffering person - both during the suffering and afterwards?

What is one thing mentioned (or perhaps a verse) that you ought to keep in mind when facing hard times? How would it help you?

40. Persecution

| | |
|--|----|
| God's People Face Persecution | 26 |
| God's Care of Persecuted Believers | 26 |
| Have Faith in God..... | 27 |
| Be Faithful to God..... | 28 |
| Rejoice in Persecution | 28 |

The Bible warns that faithfully following God inevitably results in persecution and difficulties. But as this chapter shows, it also provides practical teaching on what to do when faced with persecution – and even gives reasons to rejoice.

God's People Face Persecution

Following God and Jesus Christ results in persecution

Now in fact *all who want to live godly lives in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.* 2 TIMOTHY 3:12 NET

[JESUS, TO HIS DISCIPLES:] *People will put you out of their synagogues. Yes, the time is coming when those who kill you will think they are offering service to God.*³ *They will do this because they have not known the Father and they have not known me.*⁴ *I have told you these things now so that when the time comes you will remember that I warned you.* JOHN 16:2–4A NCV™

Christians face all kinds of hardships and suffering

“We must endure many hardships to get into the kingdom of God.”

ACTS 14:22B ISV

[PETER, TO BELIEVERS:] Be glad about this, even though it may now be necessary for you to be sad for a while because of *the many kinds of trials you suffer.* 1 PETER 1:6 GNT

God's Care of Persecuted Believers

God strengthens his people amidst trials

[PAUL, TO TIMOTHY:] Do not be ashamed, then, of witnessing for our Lord; nor be ashamed of me, a prisoner for Christ's sake. Instead, *take your part in suffering for the Good News, as God gives you the strength to do it.* 2 TIMOTHY 1:8 GNT

God rescues his people from trials

[PAUL, TO TIMOTHY:] Do not be ashamed, then, of witnessing for our Lord; nor be ashamed of me, a prisoner for Christ's sake. Instead, *take your part in suffering for the Good News, as God gives you the strength to do it.* 2 TIMOTHY 1:8 GNT

Have Faith in God

Trust in God

[PAUL, TO THE BELIEVERS AT CORINTH:] My friends, I want you to know what a hard time we had in Asia. *Our sufferings were so horrible and so unbearable that death seemed certain.* ⁹*In fact, we felt sure that we were going to die. But this made us stop trusting in ourselves and start trusting God, who raises the dead to life.* ¹⁰*God saved us from the threat of death, and we are sure that he will do it again and again.* 2 CORINTHIANS 1:8B–10 CEV

Do not be afraid

Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Instead, fear the one who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹*Aren't two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will.* ³⁰*Even all the hairs on your head are numbered.* ³¹*So do not be afraid; you are more valuable than many sparrows.* MATTHEW 10:28–31 NET

Do not worry about what to say – you will be given what to say

[JESUS, TO HIS DISCIPLES:] You will be brought before governors and kings because of me, to testify to them and to the gentiles. ¹⁹When they hand you over, *don't worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say, because in that hour what you are to say will be given to you.* ²⁰*It won't be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.* MATTHEW 10:18–20 ISV

Pray to God, asking for help

[THE EARLY BELIEVERS:] And now, *Lord, listen to their threats. Lord, help us, your servants, to speak your word without fear.* ³⁰*Help us to be brave by showing us your power to heal. Give proofs and make miracles happen by the power of Jesus, your holy servant.* ACTS 4:29–30 NCV™

Note that the believers' prayer was for God to work through them during their persecution, rather than simply for God to stop the persecution.

Be Faithful to God

Remain faithful to God and Jesus Christ

[JESUS CHRIST, TO BELIEVERS:] Don't be afraid of anything you are about to suffer. Listen! The Devil will put you to the test by having some of you thrown into prison, and your troubles will last ten days. *Be faithful to me, even if it means death, and I will give you life as your prize of victory.* REVELATION 2:10 GNT

Consider and follow Jesus Christ's example in suffering

[THE WRITER, TO BELIEVERS:] *Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, on whom our faith depends from beginning to end. He did not give up because of the cross! On the contrary, because of the joy that was waiting for him, he thought nothing of the disgrace of dying on the cross, and he is now seated at the right-hand side of God's throne.* ³*Think of what he went through; how he put up with so much hatred from sinners! So do not let yourselves become discouraged and give up.* HEBREWS 12:2–3 GNT

Rejoice in Persecution

Rejoice because trials develop Christian character

[JAMES, TO BELIEVERS:] *Consider it pure joy, my brothers, when you are involved in various trials, ³because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance. ⁴But you must let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing.* JAMES 1:2–4 ISV

Rejoice because of rewards for enduring persecution

How blessed are you whenever people hate you, avoid you, insult you, and slander you because of the Son of Man! ²³Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for your reward in heaven is great! LUKE 6:22–23A ISV

What kinds of persecution, if any, have you faced because of your faith?

What is your understanding of the concept of an antichrist of the end times?

What attitude and actions should be part of our response to those who persecute us?

When facing persecution and difficulties, how could you bring yourself to rejoice?

Believers in some countries face intense persecution. What obligations do we have to them as fellow believers? How can we support them?

Topics in This Series

Section I: What to Know

Part A. God and Spiritual Powers

1. God's Being
2. God's Character
3. Jesus Christ
4. The Holy Spirit
5. Angels, Demons and Satan

Part B. God and the World: Basics

6. God's Creation
7. God's Sovereignty
8. God's Word
9. The Problem of Sin
10. God's Judgment

Part C. God and the World: Jesus Christ

11. God's Promised Messiah
12. Jesus Christ's Mission
13. Salvation through Jesus Christ
14. The New Order
15. 'The Last Things'

Part D. God and His Own People

16. The Standing of God's People
17. Keys to God's Interaction with His People
18. God's Transformation of His People
19. God's Care of His People
20. God's Plans for His People

Section II: What to Do

Part E. Relating to God

21. Being Right with God
22. Having Faith in God
23. Loving, Fearing and Obeying God
24. Connecting with God
25. Exalting God

Part F. Church Life

26. Being One Body
27. Worshipping God
28. Serving God
29. Significant Practices
30. Church Leadership

Part G. Relating to People

31. Love
32. Justice
33. Wisdom
34. Common Relationships
35. Spreading the Gospel


Part H. Persevering


36. Standing Firm
37. Spurning Sin
38. Major Pitfalls
39. Hard Times
40. Persecution

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.

 **Two-Minute Edition:** *Key Bible teachings for people “on the run”*
For giving to non-Christians.


 **Pocket Edition:** *Key Bible teachings for seekers of truth*
Largely for giving to inquiring non-Christians or young new Christians.

 **Concise Edition:** *Key Bible teachings for new believers*
For either new or young Christians. Suitable to give to non-Christian friends. Has study series based on it.




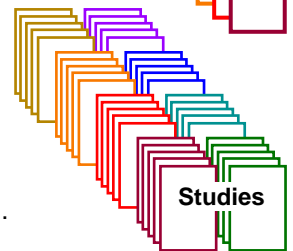
 **Foundations Edition:** *A compilation of the Bible’s teaching for believers consolidating their faith.* For newer Christians.
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It is also in an electronic version, which is a PDF file.



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 Solidarity International – www.csi-int.org;

Christian Solidarity Worldwide – www.csw.org.uk;

Christian Faith and Freedom – www.cffreedom.org

These human rights organizations speak out for persecuted Christians. They lobby authorities to intervene, and provide legal and emergency aid.

Compass Direct – www.compassdirect.org

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

Open Doors – www.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/

RLC defends and aids persecuted Christians. It also informs the global church, calling it to prayer (cf. www.idop.org; rl-prayer@crossnet.org.au).

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

It provides Bibles for persecuted Christians. It also trains national believers to plant new churches in countries of persecution.

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

This series of studies is based on the
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